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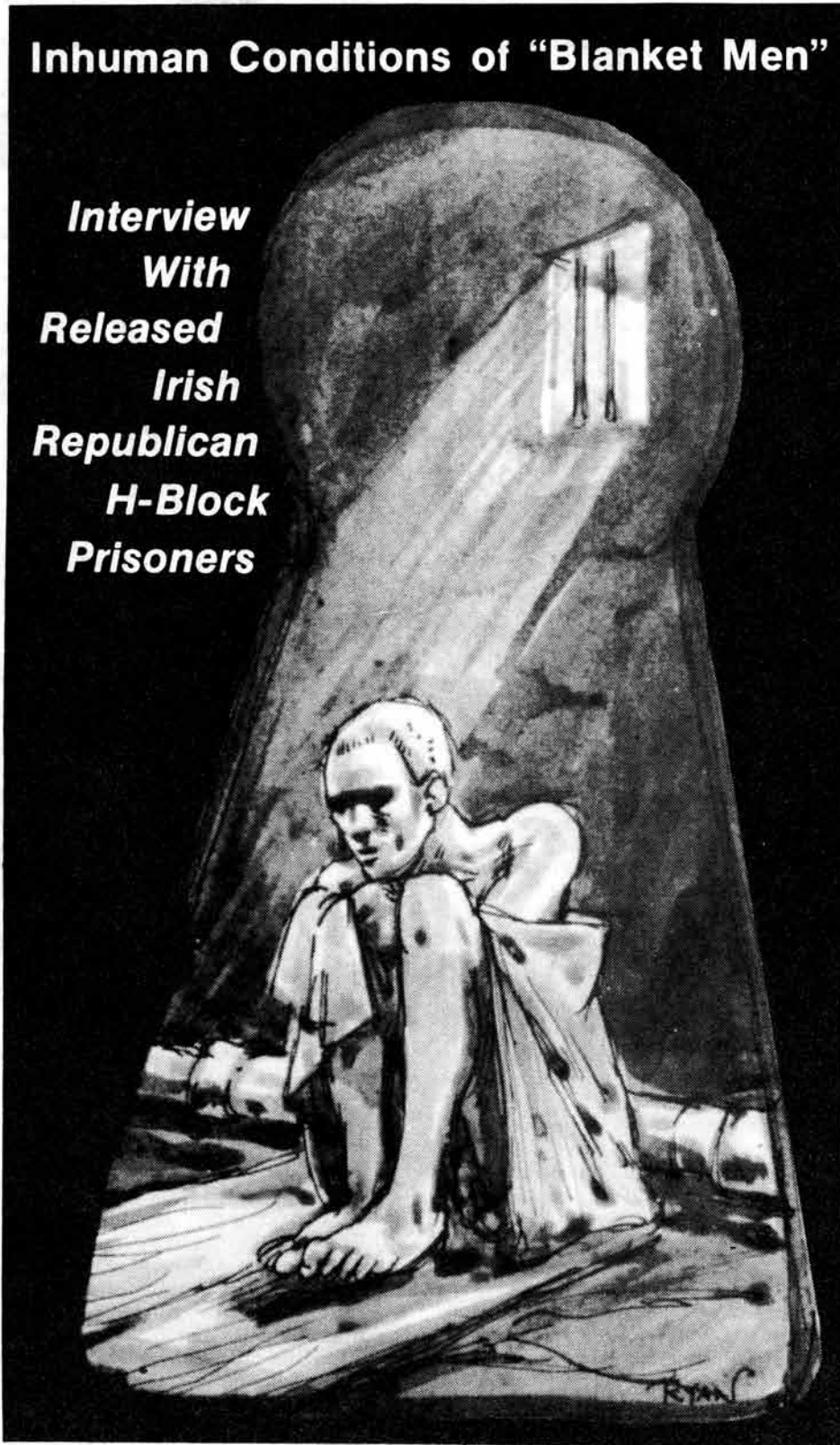
March 24, 1980

USA 85¢

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## Inhuman Conditions of "Blanket Men"

**Interview  
With  
Released  
Irish  
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H-Block  
Prisoners**



**Development  
of Workers  
Committees  
in Iran**

**The Swedish  
Nuclear Power  
Referendum**

**Nicaraguan  
Unions Rally  
Against CIA  
Maneuvers**

## Carter's Offensive Against American Workers

By David Frankel

Since the end of the 1974-75 recession, most branches of American industry have raked in record profits. The American working class, however, has experienced a continuing erosion in real wages, an official unemployment rate hovering around 6 percent, and cutbacks of government social services.

Today, workers in the United States are facing an inflation rate of more than 18 percent a year. In comparison, the previous inflationary peak in late 1973 and early 1974 was about 12 percent.

"Present high inflation threatens the economic security of our nation," President Carter declared March 14. He presented a package of "painful steps" that he promised would bring inflation under control.

"We had to do something before the issue blew up in our face," one White House adviser explained. The preoccupation of Carter's staff was indicated by the official who told *New York Times* reporter Terence Smith, "if this works, we could clinch the nomination and the election."

For the ruling class, however, more is at stake than Carter's reelection. As *Business Week* warned in its March 24 issue, unless inflation-fueled interest rates are brought under control, "the nation could face a paralysis in its financial markets, with interest rates so high they would choke the markets off and set the stage for an economic collapse."

Despite such concerns, Carter's so-called anti-inflation package was primarily intended to push forward the economic offensive against the U.S. working class, regardless of the impact on prices.

For example, Carter announced a \$4.62 fee on each barrel of imported oil. Economists estimate that this oil import fee will raise gasoline prices by ten cents a gallon and *push up the consumer price index by almost half a point!*

Clearly, Carter's war against inflation takes second place to the profits of "Big Oil." Another priority for Carter is the swollen military budget. He is committed (and in light of the advances in the world revolution, so is the entire ruling class) to maintaining big increases for arms spending.

If Carter were really serious about controlling inflation through cuts in government deficit spending, the mammoth arms budget would be the place to start. Instead, Carter is increasing military spending by about \$20 billion this year. What he proposes cutting are the already woefully inadequate federal social programs—mass

transportation, spending for jobs, welfare, health and education. These will amount to about \$2 billion in cuts in the 1980 budget, and about \$13 billion in cuts for the 1981 budget.

Carter also called for tighter credit. Immediately after his speech the Federal Reserve Board, which functions as the U.S. central bank, announced a 3 percent surcharge on its discount rate to the biggest U.S. banks. This means that the Federal Reserve's interest rate for loans to these banks has increased from 13 percent to 16 percent—up from a rate of 7.4 percent in 1978.

Higher interest rates will hit workers and small farmers, who will have to pay more for credit in their attempts to maintain their standard of living. For many working people, credit will be choked off entirely.

Budget cuts, tax increases, and the increase in interest rates are designed to force the economy into a recession. High unemployment and lower wage increases—that is the core of Carter's "anti-inflation" program.

Nevertheless, demand for loans is still strong, despite soaring interest rates. That means that the immediate impact of rising interest rates will be inflationary, as corporations pass along to consumers the price of the loans they need in order to operate.

As *Business Week* points out, Carter is playing with fire. If his measures fail to have the desired impact, and if lenders become convinced that the prospect is for greater and greater inflation, the stage could be "set for a full-blown credit crunch in which almost nobody could borrow at any price."

The result could be a far deeper recession than the one Carter and his advisers are bargaining for.

Even without a recession, however, the employers are on the offensive. With almost 200,000 auto workers already unemployed, the Chrysler Corporation has blackmailed its workforce into accepting a substandard contract—breaking the long-established pattern of a single package for GM, Ford, Chrysler and other auto workers. Under the guise of keeping the ailing giant in business to "save jobs," Chrysler workers have been robbed of up to \$643 million in wages and benefits.

Other auto giants, with help from the government, are now trying to follow Chrysler's example. Carter's Council on Wage and Price Stability announced March 7 that the Ford contract ratified by

the United Auto Workers (UAW) is in violation of the administration's wage guidelines. It wants to limit any wage package obtained by Ford workers to no more than 9.5 percent, although inflation is double that figure.

At the same time, Ford is threatening to close down one of its big plants in Cleveland. This was the ploy used by Chrysler to stampede its employees into accepting a substandard contract.

Similar moves have been made by a number of leading steel companies.

Trade union officials in the UAW and the United Steelworkers union have answered the bosses' attacks by joining with the corporations in blaming foreign imports for the problems facing workers.

UAW President Douglas Fraser made a widely publicized trip to Japan in January to persuade auto companies there to produce cars in the United States. He has called for restrictions on imports if the Japanese auto makers don't comply with such demands.

In the case of the oil industry, it is Carter himself who is carrying out the campaign for bigger profits. Carter has already succeeded in decontrolling the price of crude oil produced within the United States—a measure that will cost American consumers an estimated \$1 trillion (\$1,000,000,000,000) over the next decade.

Not satisfied with that, the oil corporations have forced some 55,000 workers out on strike for more than two months by refusing to grant wage increases and health benefits that would partially compensate for inflation.

But Carter's attempt to bring on a "mild" recession isn't the only way in which the ruling class is playing with fire. 1980 is a presidential election year, and American workers are looking for a solution to the problems they face. More and more workers are getting fed up with the idea of being robbed blind by the oil barons and then being drafted in order to defend the interests of "Big Oil" around the world.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), both through its presidential campaign and through local candidates around the country, is offering American workers a socialist alternative.

- SWP candidates stand first of all for the idea of labor solidarity—both within the United States and internationally. A success for the capitalists against the oppressed and exploited anywhere in the world will only put the U.S. rulers in a stronger position to attack other sectors of the working class and its allies.

Right now, SWP candidates are putting this idea into action by helping to build the movement against the draft, by mobilizing solidarity with the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions, and by working with others in the unions to organize support for the striking oil workers.

• As opposed to the union officials, whose support to import controls simply pits American workers against workers in other countries, the SWP says that the way for the unions to defend workers against inflation and unemployment is by fighting for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay, and for automatic wage increases as the cost of living goes up.

• In reply to the demands of Big Oil and the blackmail of Chrysler and other monopolies, the SWP candidates say "Nationalize the energy industry! Nationalize Chrysler and other companies that force their workers onto the unemployment lines!"

What are the real profits of these socially irresponsible corporations? What are their secret plans for bypassing safety laws and for evading laws against pollution? Who are the politicians they have paid off, the inspectors they have bought, the judges they have bribed? How do they engineer shortages?

The answer to all these questions and more can only be found by opening the books of these giant trusts and abolishing the secrecy behind which they shroud their dealings. Management of nationalized industries should be put in the hands of an elected board. Their books and records should be published and all their meetings should be open to the public.

Workers in these industries should exercise control over working conditions and all questions of safety. And they can play the decisive role in ensuring that the operations of nationalized industries remain under the scrutiny of the entire working-class population.

SWP candidates say, "Don't die for 'Big Oil'—nationalize it!"

• Finally, the SWP is using its election campaigns to popularize the idea of independent political action by the working class. SWP candidates urge the labor movement to break from its subordination to capitalist parties and to form an independent labor party based on the trade unions.

Such ideas are the essential framework for any effective defense against the ruling class assault on the labor movement and the American working class. And because the capitalist offensive is sharper than ever, more and more workers are beginning to listen seriously to proposals about how such ideas can be put into practice in their unions. □

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## Did U.S. War Drive Gain from Soviet Role in Afghanistan?

By Fred Feldman

[The following article is reprinted from the March 21 issue of the *Militant*, a U.S. socialist weekly.]

\* \* \*

"The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changes everything!" U.S. officials and news media crowed after Soviet troops moved in to help block a reactionary takeover in that country. The whole capitalist world would now rally to support stepped-up war preparations by the Carter administration, we were told.

Some foresaw a "new cold war," with Washington able to take the offensive against the Soviet Union and in the Middle East because of "Moscow's miscalculation."

They expected that the Pakistani military dictatorship would welcome the chance to forge open military ties with Washington against Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.

Iran, it was hoped, would now see Soviet troops in Afghanistan as its real enemy, and would hasten to mend fences with Washington by returning the U.S. hostages and dropping the demand for the return of the shah.

The big capitalist powers of Western Europe and Japan would forget their differences and unite with Washington to back economic sanctions against Moscow and military moves to bar new Irans and Afghanistans.

This new spirit of unity behind Washington was to be symbolized by the boycott of the Moscow summer Olympics by an outraged world.

Most importantly, Afghanistan was said to mark the end of the "Vietnam syndrome" in the United States—the term the government and media use for our opposition to war. Stampeded into patriotic fervor, American working people would support big increases in arms spending, accept the reinstatement of the draft, and go along with economic sacrifices to meet the "Russian threat."

When bodies like the United Nations and the governments of most Islamic nations issued condemnations of the Soviet Union, and when Congress clapped and cheered as Carter called for draft registration, many observers thought the American rulers were making headway. The fact that these bodies are not representative of working people or the oppressed of the world was overlooked.

But when it came to moving from tough talk to action, Carter's plans ran into a stubborn obstacle—the antiwar sentiments

of working people in the United States and Europe, and the anti-imperialist struggles of working people around the world. His moves to reassert Washington's domination, and to isolate Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, are coming a cropper.

On March 6, the Pakistani military dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq announced rejection of a \$400 million arms and economic aid package offered by the Carter administration. A brutal ruler facing growing opposition, Zia decided that open ties to Washington would be the kiss of death.

Zia had earlier dismissed the aid offer as "peanuts," but more than the size of the bundle was involved. As one U.S. official said, "It seems that the Government in Islamabad concluded that the political costs of relying on us were viewed as outweighing the economic and military benefits."

Zia wasn't able to convince many Pakistanis that Soviet troops in Afghanistan were a threat to their interests. While the U.S. embassy in Islamabad was burned to the ground in November by pro-Iranian demonstrators, no such protest actions have been reported against the Soviet Union's. And many among the oppressed Baluchi and Pushtun minorities in Pakistan are attracted to the gains that have been won by national minorities and other working people in Afghanistan.

To the growing frustration of the Carter administration, horror stories about Afghanistan haven't made the Iranian revolution go away either. Hundreds of thousands continue to mobilize demanding the return of the shah. And anti-imperialist students continue to hold the U.S. embassy and its personnel, with the backing of Khomeini.

Iranian President Bani-Sadr (like Khomeini) took a reactionary stand in supporting the Afghan rightists. But he has fallen far short of Washington's expectations. Stating on February 12 that his government was not aiding the rightists, Bani-Sadr added:

"We must first distinguish between the Afghan groups attached to the U.S. and to Pakistan and those really fighting for the independence of their country, these being the only ones we would like to support. The task is not easy and takes time."

Washington's European allies have also been a disappointment. Richard Burt reported in the March 7 *New York Times* that "during Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance's mission to Western Europe last month, allied leaders were unwilling to

agree to any punitive steps in their relations with Moscow.

The West German and French governments have been particularly recalcitrant, with French President Giscard d'Estaing warning against attempts to draw him into "bloc to bloc confrontations" with Moscow.

Burt concluded that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan "created a new strain in European-American relations that some Carter administration aides believe could threaten the underpinnings of the Western Alliance."

Carter's boycott of the Moscow Olympics is also in trouble. Athletes in the United States and around the world have stepped up demands that the games go on as planned. The French and West German governments have yet to endorse Carter's call.

In Australia, the boycott proposal met opposition from the Labor Party, the Australian Confederation of Trade Unions, and sporting groups. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the boycott has been well-received only by Washington's most slavish friends, as Muhammad Ali found out when Carter sent him as envoy to Africa.

But the biggest blow to Carter's war moves has come in the United States, where the "Vietnam syndrome" is proving to be alive and well.

Carter has pushed ahead with increasing the war budget, building up a U.S. armada in the Arabian Sea, and probing for the right to use bases in Oman, Kenya, and Somalia. These steps were initiated well before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

But when he began openly to push for the sacrifices that working people will have to make for new Vietnams, he got a sharp rebuff. At the suggestion of draft registration, the student movement went into high gear. Black leaders have been virtually unanimous in denouncing the proposal.

The deep antiwar sentiment in the union ranks has already found unprecedented reflection in official union bodies, with two dissenting votes cast in the AFL-CIO Executive Council against endorsing Carter's proposal. The California Conference of Machinists adopted a strong antidraft resolution.

The national antidraft mobilization in Washington called for March 22 has become the focus for the opposition.

And events like the oil workers' strike

show that workers are far from ready to give their demands for decent living standards a back seat to "national security" interests.

Instead of strengthening Washington,

the aftermath of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has further undermined Washington's capacity to use working people here or in Europe as cannon fodder against oppressed nations like Iran and

Afghanistan.

The discussions, debates, and clashes provoked by the struggle in Afghanistan are strengthening opposition to Washington's war plans. □

## Business Week's Editors Are Worried

### Can Washington Get By With Little Help From Its Friends?

By Steve Clark

America's rulers fear that recent foreign policy setbacks are undermining their ability to call the shots for the world's major imperialist powers.

"U.S. ineffectiveness frays the alliance network," is the headline on an article in the March 4 *Business Week*, a major American financial publication.

"Washington's leadership ability is being questioned overseas with an intensity not seen since American adherence to the League of Nations was rejected by the U.S. Senate in 1920," the article asserts.

Underlying this situation are the blows dealt U.S. imperialism by the workers and peasants of Indochina, Africa, Iran, Afghanistan, and Central America. As *Business Week* puts it: "these [changes] are largely reflections of the disorders in the world"—that's ruling-class parlance for *revolutions*—"it is only natural that they manifest themselves in the alliances."

As an example, *Business Week* cites the outcome of the Washington visit in early March of West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt:

Schmidt returned to Bonn . . . in the certain knowledge that he can go his own way, because Carter is incapable of imposing U.S. policies on Bonn. Schmidt's earlier criticism of Carter's Olympic Games boycott proposal as ineffective, for example, has now turned into open opposition. He continues to oppose sanctions against the Soviets as unworkable.

And, the article continues, "Schmidt will get support from his European Community [Common Market] partners for his opposition to Washington policies generally."

*Business Week* also points to the greater dependence of the Japanese and European rulers on oil imports from the Middle East. Washington's allies are far from confident that they can depend on the U.S. naval build-up in the Indian Ocean to ensure their access to this vital resource, says *Business Week*. This is because "they also realize that this power might be worthless in domestic political explosions that potentially threaten every oil producer in the Persian Gulf."

The article presents a brief rundown of recent events that have heightened the "perception of American weakness."

In the Middle East, Washington has been unable to enlist even the Saudi Arabians—whose very state is a creation of American capital—in their defense program for the area. In southern Africa, Washington simply does not have a strategy to ensure the continued supply of critical minerals and metals to the West [i.e. no strategy to ensure the continued viability of white minority rule]. In East Asia, there is increasing fear not only of the Soviets and North Koreans but also of the inability of the U.S. to respond should the powerful Vietnamese military machine attempt to roll over more of its neighbors [a reference to Vietnam's aid to Kampuchean insurgents who toppled the Pol Pot tyranny last year]. . . . In South Asia, Pakistan does not feel it can risk engagement itself on the American side. Central America and the Caribbean are in turmoil, and Communist ability to harass the U.S. is increasing apace.

Developments such as these, says *Business Week*, are "melting the glue of America's alliances. . . . The culmination could be the end of the Western alliance—and

the 'Finlandization' of Western Europe."

This final comment by the *Business Week* editors is more of a barb at their fellow capitalists abroad than a serious prediction of the ultimate trajectory of interimperialist relations. They know that the Japanese and West European rulers have no choice but to rely on U.S. military power to police the world on behalf of the profit system. The imperialists remain united in their goal not only of preventing any new revolutionary overturn of capitalist property relations, but in eventually restoring them in the countries where they've already been abolished.

But *Business Week's* worry is real. Washington faces escalating struggles abroad and deep antiwar opposition at home. And that makes *everything* it sets out to accomplish more difficult.

Too bad for *Business Week* and its class. But all the better for ours. □

## Revolutionists Campaign for Immediate Reactor Shutdown

### Sweden's Referendum on Nuclear Power

By Arnold Jeppsson

STOCKHOLM—On March 23 the Swedish people go to the polls. Three alternatives are on the ballot—one against nuclear energy, two for nuclear energy. This special referendum has been forced by public opinion.

Because of popular opposition to nuclear power, the government has been unable to fuel any new reactors for nearly four years.

Aside from the six operating reactors in Sweden today, only six others are under construction. Two reactors, one in the Forsmark complex and another in the Ringhals complex, have been scheduled for fueling immediately after the referendum. Two other reactors, Forsmark 2 and Ringhals 4, are almost ready and may be given preliminary fueling six months after the referendum. The last two reactors, Forsmark 3 and Oskarshamn 3, will not be ready for fueling for several years.

Line 1 on the referendum ballot is the proposal of the industrialists and the Moderates (the Swedish right). It calls for building twelve reactors, with the possibility of dismantling them in 2010.

Line 2 is the proposal of the Social Democrats and union leaderships. It too calls for operating twelve reactors, and then for them to be phased out by 2010. The reactors are to be state-owned. The state already has an 80 percent share.

These two proposals are nearly identical! The only difference is whether or not the state should take 100 percent of the stock, as opposed to 80 percent.

Line 3 calls for the six reactors now under construction being dismantled in a maximum of ten years. It also says that no more reactors should be fueled and bars uranium mining in Sweden.

Line 3 is supported by the Center Party of Premier Thorbjörn Fälldin; the Vänsterpartiet Kommunisterna (VPK—the Left Party of Communists); and by about fifty organizations, including environmental and religious groups. Virtually all the left organizations not represented in parliament call for a vote for this proposal, including the Kommunistiska Arbetarförbundet (KAF—Swedish section of the Fourth International).

Why are there two propositions in favor of nuclear power on the ballot?

First, the parties supporting nuclear power think it will be easier to win approval if they have two lines on the ballot.

Second, the Social Democrats and unions are afraid of becoming entirely associated with the capitalists' proposal. Swedish workers have suffered wage losses in the last three years, so the Social Democrats want to take some distance from the bosses in order to preserve their image.

Moreover, the Social Democratic Party is split over the referendum. The Social Democrats for an Alternative Energy Policy (SAFE) is supporting Line 3. SAFE has previously fought inside the party against the leadership's pronuclear policy, but its support to Line 3 marks the first time it has gone public with these differences.

Supporters of Line 3 are concentrating their campaign on the dangers of nuclear power. Although supporters of Lines 1 and 2 raise a hue and cry about "scare propaganda," they cannot refute the arguments that nuclear power is dangerous to life.

Opinion polls indicate that together Lines 1 and 2 will win, but that Line 3 will get the single largest vote.

Premier Thorbjörn Fälldin, a verbal opponent of nuclear power, has given the pronuclear position a boost, saying that Line 3 would have to get more than 50 percent of the vote in order for the nuclear power industry to be dismantled. Fälldin's objective has never been to get rid of nuclear energy, but simply to win and stay in office. He has stated his intention to remain in office regardless of the outcome of the referendum.

For the past five years, the nuclear power issue has played a decisive role in Swedish politics. The first government of the bourgeois parties in forty-four years got into office in the 1976 parliamentary elections precisely on this issue; Fälldin's Center Party claimed to oppose the nuclear power projects started under the previous Social Democratic government. The capitalist coalition underwent innumerable cabinet crises and finally split over the nuclear issue after two years.

The upcoming referendum is an attempt by Swedish politicians—from both the capitalist and Social Democratic parties—to get rid of an awkward question. After the referendum, they hope to return to business as usual.

Over the past five years, more and more people in Sweden have been mobilized



Demonstrators march on Barsebäck reactor.

against nuclear power. In the spring of 1978, the Folkkampanjen mot Atomkraft (People's Campaign Against Nuclear Power) was formed. It is a broad umbrella organization, including the Center Party youth, the Christian Democratic Party, environmental organizations, and most far-left organizations, including the KAF.

The Folkkampanj organized several demonstrations and began a petition drive to demand a referendum. But the accident at Three Mile Island intervened, changing the situation.

Olof Palme, leader of the Social Democratic opposition in parliament, suddenly came out in favor of a referendum. With his eyes on the September 1979 elections, Palme said that if nuclear energy were dangerous to life, it should be stopped immediately. But he added that the Social Democrats would wait for the results of the investigations in the United States of the Harrisburg incident. Until these investigations were completed, the Social Democrats would have no line on the nuclear power issue.

Nonetheless, the Folkkampanj could have taken up Palme's admission that nuclear power should be stopped *immediately* if it is unsafe. Instead, however, the leaders of the Folkkampanj proposed that the nuclear power industry should be dismantled over a maximum of ten years. This proposal was worked out in secret negotiations with Premier Fälldin, who would not accept an immediate dismantling.

Only the KAF took a clear line that nuclear power is a mortal danger and that the reactors must be dismantled immediately. This position met sharp attacks, but the KAF stuck to its guns. Since then, more and more people have begun to realize that this is the only correct position.

Leaks have appeared at several Swedish reactors, making it clear that such leaks can develop any time. This has led the women's organization, Kvinnokamp för Fred (Women's Struggle for Peace), to send a delegation to Fälldin to demand that those reactors with leaks be immediately shut down. It has also organized demonstrations against nuclear power, which the

Folkkampanj has not done.

The Folkkampanj was reorganized when the Center Party joined it. All the far-left organizations, which had previously done the work, were excluded. Though expelled from the leadership, these organizations are still participating in the coalition.

The Center Party is now running the Folkkampanj, and it is not interested in demonstrations.

For example, the Folkkampanj leaders opposed a proposal for a march last September against the Barsebäck reactor. Barsebäck constitutes an immediate threat to two million people in Helsingborg, Malmö, Lund, and Landskrona in Sweden; and in Copenhagen and Helsingör in Denmark.

After the Harrisburg accident, more than 300,000 names were collected on a petition demanding that the Barsebäck reactor be immediately closed down. Several organizations in the Folkkampanj proposed a march to Barsebäck during the election campaign of 1979.

But the Center Party and the VPK refused to go along. A large demonstration for the immediate shutdown of Barsebäck would go against their plan for dismantlement over a ten year period.

Despite this opposition, independent antinuclear activists organized a march on Barsebäck of 12,000 persons.

The KAF has actively campaigned for Line 3 in the referendum, holding rallies and publishing materials explaining why nuclear power should be stopped *immediately*. The KAF stresses that the struggle against nuclear power must continue after the referendum.

In order for the antinuclear struggle to achieve the greatest striking power, the KAF explains, the working class must be brought into the movement. The KAF is waging a fight against the Social Democrats to convince as many workers as possible to vote for Line 3.

But the task of getting the workers involved in the struggle against nuclear power will not end on March 23. Even if Line 3 wins, there will still be six reactors operating in this country, and they will continue to constitute a deadly threat to Swedish workers. □

## Iran Masses Thwart U.S. Attempts to Downplay Shah's Crimes

By Janice Lynn

Reports from anti-imperialist fighters in Iran give a more accurate picture than accounts in the big-business press of the scope of popular support for the Muslim Students Following the Imam's Line, who are occupying the U.S. embassy in Tehran.

Recent demonstrations in front of the embassy have attracted tens of thousands of participants. They came to show their support for the actions of the militant students in resisting the U.S. government's attempts to divert attention from the crimes of the shah onto Washington's "grievances" against Iran.

The protests were spearheaded by Tehran's high school and university students. A constant flow of people filled the square outside the embassy, with thousands of students maintaining overnight vigils to oppose the transfer of the American hostages to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Council.

On March 6, the students in the embassy, citing "intolerable pressures" from the council, had declared themselves ready to turn over the hostages if this were shown to be the will of the Iranian people. The Islamic Revolutionary Council had demanded that the students allow the United Nations commission of inquiry to visit all the U.S. hostages.

But the students reversed their decision after discovering that the council's representative, Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, had lied to them. Ghotbzadeh had said that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had ordered the visit by the UN commission.

Instead, in a March 10 statement, Khomeini backed the student's position that the commission should *only* see those Americans in the embassy implicated in acts against Iran and complicity with the shah. Once the commission issued their report on the shah, then they could see all the hostages.

Later that day, the Revolutionary Council endorsed Khomeini's position. The UN commission then left Iran without completing its investigation.

The largest demonstration in solidarity with the students took place March 8. Contingents of students marched from universities and high schools throughout Tehran, many located miles away from the U.S. embassy.

Support messages were received from many of factory *shoras* (committees). These were printed in the newspapers and broadcast on the radio.

The Islamic Workers Shora, representing

scores of factory shoras in Tehran, expressed its "wholehearted and complete support to the Muslim Students Following the Imam's Line" in their refusal to have the UN commission interview all the hostages.

The Tehran shora explained that the U.S. imperialists were trying to sabotage the Iranian revolution by having the commission, which was supposed to investigate the shah's crimes, meet with the U.S. hostages. The U.S. government's intention, the shora explained, was to secure the release of the hostages without returning the shah. The message denounced Washington's threat to impose an economic boycott against Iran.

The shora's message concluded, "releasing the hostages before the return of the shah would be an insult to the 70,000 martyrs whose blood was shed in fighting the shah."

The March 11 *New York Times* reported that "several groups, including construction workers, had threatened to strike if the hostages were freed."

The militant students addressed the large March 8 rally to explain their position. They said that the imperialist press would make the commission's visit to the hostages the central focus of publicity all over the world. The monstrous crimes of the shah would be overshadowed and downplayed.

This same concern was the topic of an editorial in the March 11 issue of the Islamic newspaper *Azedagan*:

The commission's duty was only to investigate the crimes of the deposed Shah and one of the basic objectives of the United States was to bring

up the hostage issue instead of the crimes of the Shah and its own treason and thereby to deviate from the revolution's line and laugh at having fooled us.

As *New York Times* Tehran correspondent John Kifner admitted in the March 12 issue, the commission indeed was "vulnerable" to this suspicion." Kifner declared, "There was little pretense that the United Nations was suddenly moved by either curiosity or outrage at the prospect that the Shah might not have been a benevolent ruler after all."

The UN commissioners refused to accept 480 pages of documents exposing direct U.S. interference in Iran that the militant students had painstakingly pieced together from shredded papers they had found in the embassy.

Although the UN commission has now suspended its inquiry, people throughout the world received powerful confirmation of the justice of the demands of the Iranian masses when maimed and crippled victims of the U.S.-backed shah appeared before the commission over the past few weeks to give testimony.

At the same time, the actions of the Iranian masses, mobilized in support of the militant students, succeeded in preventing the U.S. government from using the commission to lend legitimacy to its cynical claim of innocence in the shah's crimes.

As *New York Times* reporter Bernard Nossiter noted March 12, "The great hope was that the commission would serve as a means to dissolve the power of the militants. Instead, it became a rallying point that might increase their strength." □

## HKE Supports Independent Workers Candidates

## How Iranian Left Voted in Elections

By Janice Lynn

The first round of elections for Iran's new national parliament generated a lot of interest among Iranian working people. A second round will be held in early April.

Several workers parties fielded candidates. In addition, a number of workers ran independent campaigns, seeking support from their factory and neighborhood *shoras* (committees).

The Iranian Revolutionary Workers Party (HKE) fielded eight candidates in the elections.\* In addition, it called for a vote for seven workers who ran independ-

\*See last week's *IP/I* for more on the HKE's program and candidates, as well as the election statement of the Iranian Socialist Workers Party (HKS). The HKE and HKS are the two wings of the Iranian section of the Fourth International.

ent campaigns for the parliament. The HKE pointed out that only the working class has the power to lead the toiling masses of Iran to victory over imperialist exploiters and oppression.

Parviz Nokhiz, a Tehran oil refinery worker, was one of the candidates supported by the HKE. He was a leader of the general strike of oil workers that was instrumental in toppling the shah's regime. In an interview in the HKE newspaper, *Kargar*, Nokhiz said that since more than 80 percent of the Iranian population are workers and other oppressed people, more working people should be elected to parliament. This would enable them to wage a more effective fight for their rights. Nokhiz explained that workers sacrificed the most for the revolution, so they must continue to struggle to gain control over their destiny.

Mohammad Reza Soleinani is one of the 3,000 autoworkers at the General Motors subsidiary in Tehran. He campaigned for solidarity with the Muslim Students Following the Imam's Line in their anti-imperialist struggle; for extending and uniting the shoras; and for creating the "army of 20 million" to defend Iran from imperialist threats. These were also the three central planks of the eight HKE candidates.

Sayed Jabar Sasavi works on the construction of Tehran's subway. Sasavi called for the confiscation of the factories of the imperialists, and of those Iranian capitalists tied to imperialism. He also supported the peasants' struggle against the large landowners and called for land,



Recent issues of *Kargar* (Worker), newspaper of the HKE. Headline says: "Workers Representatives are Only Guarantee that Anti-imperialist Struggle Will Be Carried Forward in Parliament."

water, grain, and agricultural implements to be supplied to the peasants. He indicated his support to the Palestinian, Eritrean, Omani, and Saharan liberation struggles.

The four other worker's candidates sup-

ported by the HKE were Rahim Khoshvel, a Tehran textile worker; Yousef, a railroad worker; Ahmad Reza Karimi, from Tehran's Shaka Works; and Khosrow Movahad, a trainee in a steel foundry in Isfahan.

The HKE also gave critical support in the balloting to members of the Mujahedeen who were running as candidates. The Mujahedeen, an Islamic anti-imperialist organization, has a strong base in the working class. The Mujahedeen held large election rallies in Tehran, Rasht, Tabriz, and other cities throughout Iran, some of which were as large as 300,000.

A central focus of the Mujahedeen campaigns was opposition to the two rounds of the elections. It called for a single round with a system of proportional representation.

The Mujahedeen candidates solidarized with the militant students in the U.S. embassy. The HKE urged them to initiate demonstrations and help mobilize mass support for this critical fight against U.S. imperialism.

The Tudeh Party, the pro-Moscow Communist party, ran its own candidates in many cities. In addition, Tudeh supported several Mujahedeen candidates, including Mujahedeen leader, Massoud Rajavi. Tudeh also supported several bourgeois candidates.

The Fedayeen, an organization whose guerrilla fighters participated in the struggle against the shah, fielded its own candidates. It also supported members of the Mujahedeen as well as several bourgeois candidates. □

### Supporters of Iran Revolution Sign Appeal for HKE Women Prisoners



HASHEMI FALLAHI

Supporters of the Iranian revolution are circulating an appeal for the release of two women prisoners in Iran, Mahsa Hashemi and Fatima Fallahi. Both are members of the Iranian Revolutionary Workers Party (HKE) and longtime activists in the fight against U.S. imperialism. The two women are being held in Evin Prison in Tehran.

In the United States the appeal has been signed by prominent individuals who have indicated their support to the

Iranian Revolution and opposition to the U.S. government's threats against it. Signers include Robert Allen, an editor of *Black Scholar* magazine; Robert Meeropol, son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg; Dave McReynolds, War Resisters League; Prof. Dennis Brutus, Black South African anti-apartheid activist; Elizabeth Reed, Local 535, Service Employees International Union, San Diego; Paul Wishard, Building and Construction Trades Council, Denver; James Houghton, Harlem Fight Back; Sami Esmail, Palestinian activist and former prisoner in Israeli jails; attorney Abdeen Jabara, well known defender of Palestinian rights; Rev. Orris Walker, participant in the Black Minister's Conference in Detroit; and Morton Sobell, co-defendant with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

The appeal should be telegraphed to president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, Tehran, Iran, with copies to *Kargar*, P.O. Box 41-3586, Tehran, Iran, and *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.



## Salvadoran Junta Unleashes Terror Against Opponents

By Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—The U.S.-backed military rulers of El Salvador have launched a new wave of repression and terrorism against the workers and peasants movements.

According to figures released March 11 by the Salvadoran Human Rights Commission, ninety-four people were killed by government forces or by paramilitary right-wing terrorist groups during the preceding week.

Among the victims were Carlos Arías, a leader of the United People's Action Front (FAPU), and Roberto Castellanos, press and propaganda secretary of the Nationalist Democratic Union (UDN). Castellanos's wife, Annette Mathiessen, a Danish citizen, was also killed. The couple had disappeared on March 2. Their bodies were found in the capital, San Salvador, on March 8.

Following declaration of a state of siege and suspension of constitutional guarantees on March 6, security police carried out raids on the homes and offices of activists in left groups, trade unions, and other popular organizations. At the same time, right-wing terrorists stepped up their activity focusing on the campus of the National University, one of the few places in the country where the revolutionary organizations have been able to maintain public headquarters and hold meetings.

On March 10, twenty-five armed men surrounded and opened fire on the schools of law and humanities at the university. Later the same day, snipers posted on a nearby roof fired on a bus as it approached the campus.

The government's new attack on the antidictatorial forces accompanies a series of demagogic moves aimed at defusing the rising mass movement in the countryside and undercutting the opposition politically.

On March 6, the ruling military-civilian junta announced the confiscation of some 376 big estates—about 30 percent of all cultivable land in the country—and sent army units to occupy them. The government then called on the peasants and laborers who live and work on the seized estates to hold meetings to organize cooperatives.

However, the landlords of these estates—few of whom actually live on their farms—have now been replaced by what amounts to an army occupation. The same military forces that have repressed the rural poor for decades—and that are still killing scores of peasants every month—are now carrying out an even more direct role in controlling the peasant movement.

Thus the junta's "agrarian reform" is not aimed at providing social justice in the countryside but at breaking the strong revolutionary-minded organizations of El Salvador's rural workers. The other goal is to foster the illusion internationally that the junta is somehow "progressive" and sincere in its oft-repeated promises of "deepgoing social reforms" and that it is opposed only by the "extreme left" and the "extreme right."

This maneuver was denounced by the influential Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Arnulfo Romero. In a sermon delivered March 9 at a funeral mass for Roberto Castellanos and Annette Mathiessen, Romero condemned the continuing repression and termed the land expropriations "capitalist" reforms that "are taking place through a military occupation of the countryside that at a given moment can generate the return of the wealthy to power."

Despite the junta's demagogic "agrarian reform" and similar moves such as the nationalization of banking and the imposition of state controls on foreign trade, it is now more isolated than ever.

The only civilian political force that has lent support to the dictatorship is the Christian Democratic Party, three of whose leaders joined the junta when it was formed in early January. On March 4, however, one Christian Democrat, Héctor

Dada Hirezi, resigned from the junta and went into exile in Mexico. The government first claimed Dada had withdrawn for "personal reasons." But on March 8 he published a statement in the Mexico City daily *Excelsior* that condemned the junta's "repressive process" and its failure to engage in a "dialogue" with the opposition.

When the Christian Democratic leadership met on March 9 to choose a replacement for Dada, a sharp debate broke out and culminated in the expulsion of ten leaders from the party. These figures claim the support of some 80 percent of the party's ranks. They are reportedly involved in talks with the Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses, the opposition bloc that includes the FAPU, UDN, Revolutionary People's Bloc (BPR), and the February 28 People's Leagues (LP-28).

Washington has made clear its unconditional backing for El Salvador's bloody rulers. The regime's isolation and the growing strength and unity of the revolutionary worker and peasant opposition indicate that a showdown is approaching. Direct U.S. military intervention cannot be ruled out. American military personnel have already been seen in the fields with Salvadoran army units. Actions to demand "U.S. Hands Off El Salvador" are urgently needed. □

### Seeks to Prevent 'Another Nicaragua'

## U.S. Sends Troops, Arms to Massacre Salvadorans

By Janice Lynn

Washington claims that its military and political support to the junta in El Salvador is aimed at preventing a right-wing coup. Its real aim, however, is to prevent "at all costs 'another Nicaragua,'" as *New York Times* correspondent Alan Riding recently put it.

In fact, Panamanian government officials have accused Washington "of preparing the ground for a right-wing coup d'état in El Salvador," according to the February 29 issue of *Latin American Weekly Report*.

According to *LAWR*, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Wil-

liam Bowdler, and Robert Pastor, Latin American specialist for the U.S. National Security Council, visited Panama City several weeks ago to discuss El Salvador with Panamanian officials. At this meeting, the two suggested "that support for a right-wing takeover might be the only way out." At that point, according to the account, "the Panamanians 'abruptly' ended the discussions."

"Both the State Department and the US ambassador to Panama, Ambler Moss, have denied the report," *LAWR* explains, but it was described "as 'substan-

tially correct' by the Panamanian ambassador to the USA, Juan Antonio Tack."

Publicly, the Carter administration has warned El Salvador's military junta to beware of ultra right-wing elements, threatening to withhold \$50 million in economic aid and some \$7 million in military assistance unless certain "reforms" are carried through. But Washington is clearly uncertain that the current junta can survive, even with U.S. military backing.

The junta came to power last October 15 with Washington's blessings after deposing the former military dictator, Gen. Carlos Humberto Romero. Like its predecessor, however, the new junta is based almost entirely on the armed forces. It faces opposition both from the toilers and from the most right-wing sectors of the capitalist class.

"The specter of civil war and possibly the support of the United States is about all that maintains this government," admitted one source close to the junta.

Repression in El Salvador has escalated rather than declined since Romero's fall. San Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero reports that some 660 people have been killed by the regime's police and army since the beginning of 1980. Most of the victims have been peasants and workers.

In its latest move, the U.S.-backed government declared a thirty-day "state of siege" to accompany its banking and land "reforms" (see accompanying article). The real purpose of this declaration of martial law is to crush El Salvador's revolutionary organizations, labor unions, and peasant organizations.

The U.S. State Department put it quite succinctly in announcing it was pleased with the junta's "reforms" since they will undermine "a Marxist takeover attempt."

On the other hand, Washington has not

uttered one word about the junta's suspension of constitutional guarantees—which restricts all travel; bans freedom of the press; prohibits street rallies and demonstrations; gives the police increased arrest and detention power (allowing them to arrest people and search premises without a warrant); and provides for military trials for anyone accused of treason, spying, rebellion, or sedition.

U.S. troops and military equipment have already been used against El Salvador's workers and peasants.

Archbishop Romero charges U.S. complicity in the murder of hundreds of Salvadorans. He points out that last November the U.S. government shipped \$200,000 worth of tear gas, gas masks, and bullet-proof vests to El Salvador's military police, as well as providing it "riot control" training.

In a recent interview, José Leoncio Pichinte, general secretary of El Salvador's February 28 People's Leagues, (LP-28) reports that during the last several months, the U.S. government has shipped sixty tons of arms to the junta through the port of Acajutla, including army tanks that the Salvadoran police and army are using against the workers and peasants.

According to Leoncio Pichinte, during a strike in mid-December at a hacienda in El Congo, U.S. Marines, in the capacity of chiefs of operations, directly participated in the massacre of 100 peasants.

In a full-page ad in the March 12 *New York Times*, the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), a group linked with LP-28, reports other examples of U.S. complicity.

On January 23, for example, marines on duty at the U.S. embassy in San Salvador captured two students, members of the Revolutionary People's Bloc (BPR), dragged them inside the embassy gates, and later turned them over to the National Guard. These two students are now listed as "disappeared."

In addition, the ERP stated:

During the past few days an enormous American military mission has arrived in our country: advisors and military technicians in counter-insurrection, veterans of Viet Nam, are here giving courses to officials and classes in the General Headquarters of the armed forces. Technicians in explosives in other branches of the repressive forces, such as the National Police, the National Guard, and the Police of the Treasury Department, are of American nationality.

Heavy artillery, helicopters, small and large tanks with a heavy supply of munitions have arrived in the country from the United States and Israel.

Washington has confirmed the dispatch to El Salvador of what the February 24 *New York Times* called "military training teams . . . to instruct the army in 'clean' methods of counterinsurgency."

LP-28 leader Leoncio Pichinte aptly described the junta's real character weeks before its announced "reforms."

What is happening in our country is that some sectors of the oligarchy are proposing to solve the crisis through immediate repression. . . . Another sector is intent on politically maneuvering, together with imperialism, to first try to improve its image and then to try to destroy the movement. In the end, both sectors are after the same objectives and the differences between them are not antagonistic.

The junta, backed by U.S. imperialism, has now opted for the illusion of reform and the reality of repression both at the same time.

Supporters of the Central American revolution will not be taken in by this maneuver, however. Now more than ever, it is important to heed the call of the LP-28 statement for "all conscientious Americans who want an end to war, and . . . their organizations that are in favor of peace and self-determination, to support the struggle against the imposition of these criminal interventionist plans in our country." □

## 'Nicaragua Won't Be Another Chile'

# Sandinista Unions Mobilize Thousands Against CIA

By Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—On March 5 a U.S. Senate committee froze indefinitely the \$75 million loan the Carter administration promised to Nicaragua months ago. Responding quickly and angrily, thousands of workers, students, and other Nicaraguans poured into the streets here March 6 in a militant protest demonstration.

Opposition to Washington's stepped-up pressure against the Nicaraguan revolution has been mounting here since February 27, when the U.S. House of Representatives went behind closed doors to hear a

secret CIA report on alleged "communist infiltration" in Nicaragua.

"Hands off Nicaragua!" and "Death to the CIA!" were among the most popular slogans chanted by the demonstrators on March 6.

They were answering a call by the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST) to protest "the maneuvers of imperialism and its sinister CIA—who yesterday armed the genocidal tyrant Anastasio Somoza and who today are trying to hold back the unstoppable advance of the Sandinista

people's revolution."

The march stepped off late in the afternoon from the CST's headquarters, passed through several neighborhoods in west central Managua, and ended with a rally outside "El Chipote," the headquarters of the National Directorate of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

Guerrilla commander Omar Cabezas addressed the demonstrators and called on Nicaraguans to be alert to efforts by Washington to "destabilize" the revolution.

He pointed to the CIA-orchestrated eco-

conomic sabotage that undermined the Allende regime in Chile and paved the way for Pinochet's bloody counterrevolutionary coup in September 1973.

"In Nicaragua they won't be able to throw the army against the government" as in Chile, Cabezas said. "Instead we will throw [the Sandinista People's Army] against the hoarders and speculators and against those who boycott production. . . .

"What happened in Chile is not going to happen here. Here there is a revolution."

An editorial in the FSLN daily *Barricada* the day after the demonstration hailed it as "an event that most clearly shows how deep the class struggle in the country has gone."

"The people did not turn out to search for spies," *Barricada* continued, "although we are certain there are some, but rather to demonstrate their power and unity and their repudiation of the concrete manifestations of imperialism in the country—the traitorous bourgeoisie and those who are decapitalizing their enterprises, the diversionists and opportunists, the financial maneuvers of imperialism. . . ."

The Nicaraguan government issued a decree March 2 against capitalist sabotage of efforts at economic revival. This "decapitalization" by industrialists refers to their attempts to remove from the country the capital and equipment that is needed for Nicaragua to overcome the war destruction, its related scarcities, and high unemployment.

"The anti-imperialism that took to the streets yesterday must from now on be taken up in the workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, villages, and government bodies, turning the entire nation into a bastion of anti-imperialist struggle," *Barricada* said. □

## Launches Plan of Struggle for Full Equality

### International Women's Day in Nicaragua

By Lorraine Thiebaud

MANAGUA—Celebrating International Women's Day for the first time in a country free from tyranny, thousands of Nicaraguan women marched through the streets of this city March 9. The demonstration was the culmination of a week of activities.

Women of all ages came from every corner of Nicaragua and marched in provincial contingents, frequently led by all-women militia units. With raised fists they entered the Plaza of the Workers, shouting the main slogan of the women's movement here—"Building a new country, we build the new woman!"

Women's Week was inaugurated nationally by the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMNLAE). Activities focused on the accomplishments of women in the eight months since the revolutionary victory. The week also opened a nationwide discussion of AMNLAE's Minimum Plan of Struggle for Women.

Special emphasis during the week's events was placed on the upcoming literacy campaign, which has such fundamental significance in improving the lives of Nicaraguan women. More than 60 percent of urban women and 90 percent of rural women can neither read nor write their own names. Illiterate women in every city and town organized meetings to honor the

mothers of the teenaged men and women who will live in the countryside for six months, working in literacy brigades.

Front-page coverage in *Barricada*, the daily newspaper of the FSLN, was devoted to the many assemblies, panel discussions, and visits to factories, neighborhood committees, and high schools throughout the week. A poetry, painting, and song competition was sponsored; prizes were awarded by guerrilla commander Dora Maria Tellez at a cultural event held in homage to Celia Sánchez, heroine of the Cuban revolution.

The highlight of women's week was the presentation by Gloria Carrión, secretary general of AMNLAE, of the Minimum Plan of Struggle for Women. At the March 9 demonstration, Carrión said women are demanding full participation in making all new laws and government policies, especially those relating to health, education, and food distribution.

The AMNLAE is emphasizing three priorities: full equality before the law; equal pay for equal work and equal opportunity to work; and revision and enforcement of laws regarding responsibility for paternity.

Tomás Borge, a commander of the revolution, spoke at the demonstration to express the commitment of the FSLN's National Directorate to women's liberation. "It is necessary now to make a new revolution, a women's revolution," Borge said.

### Statement by Revolutionary Workers League

## Referendum Strategy a Dead-end for Quebec Independence

[The debate is now heating up on the referendum on Quebec's constitutional future, expected to be held in June.

[The Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ) has just published a special issue of its newspaper *Le Monde Ouvrier* on the referendum. The FTQ has scheduled a series of regional membership assemblies throughout Quebec in late February and early March to discuss what position the 350,000-member federation should take.

[Other union federations are also discussing the national question. The Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) has already voted at a convention in April 1978—to work toward "an independent and socialist Quebec."

[In November 1979 several labor leaders

and intellectuals, including former CSN president Marcel Pepin and former Teachers' Union (CEQ) leaders Yvon Charbonneau and Raymond Laliberté, issued a manifesto calling for "a socialist, democratic, and independent Quebec."

[Another recent contribution to the debate came from the People's Education Center (CFP), a trade union-sponsored workers' educational program in Montreal.

[Reprinted here are extensive excerpts from a statement on the Quebec referendum issued by the Quebec National Bureau of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL). The statement was published in the February 1 issue of the revolutionary socialist fortnightly *Lutte Ouvrière*. Written as an answer to the CFP document, the statement outlines the approach of revolu-

tionary socialists to the issues raised in the referendum.

[The translation is by the Canadian fortnightly *Socialist Voice*.]

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The publication of the Parti Québécois [PQ] White Paper *Quebec-Canada: A New Deal* and the unveiling of the referendum question have clearly illustrated the nature of the Parti Québécois's plans. A debate has now begun that will polarize Quebec society.

The People's Education Center (CFP) has helped to launch the referendum debate by calling for critical support to the "yes" vote position. Despite claims to the contrary, this position would lead the workers movement to tail-end the PQ. In

our view, spoiling the ballot is the only voting formula that conforms to working people's interests.

We don't need to argue at length against supporters of the "no" vote in the referendum. This is the position of the political forces who defend the status quo in general and Canadian Confederation in particular. The imperialist Canadian bourgeoisie and its parties will pour millions into the campaign for a "no," using every proven method of blackmail and intimidation from factory closures to police provocations.

The Social-Democratic leadership of the New Democratic Party and the Chauvinist leadership of the Canadian Labor Congress will also be campaigning against Quebec and for federalism.

Thus, the struggle to defend Quebec's right to self-determination will be a central issue in the referendum fight. It will require the building of an alliance with the rank and file members of the English Canadian labor movement, who have no interest in preserving the oppressive framework of Confederation.

The PQ's goal of sovereignty-association represents the search for a compromise with the federal state—the rejection of any real break with it.

The government is not even putting forward a precise choice in the referendum. It is asking for a mandate to negotiate a "new deal" with Canada.

Just to be perfectly clear, it even specifies that the Quebec government will never take unilateral action against the federal state. Any transfer of power would be accomplished through negotiation and mutual agreement between the concerned parties on the basis of a well-worked out plan to avoid "any administrative disturbance," as the White Paper puts it.

The preamble to the question even promises that any change in Quebec's political status would be submitted to another referendum before being implemented.

Given these conditions, a "yes" vote is not a vote for independence or even for sovereignty-association. It is a pure and simple vote of confidence in the PQ government to negotiate whatever it wants with the federal state.

It would be entirely different if the referendum concerned specific measures submitted for the approval of the Québécois. The workers movement should unconditionally support all progressive measures that advance the struggle for Quebec's national liberation.

Let's take a recent example. The Supreme Court, an instrument of the federal state, has invalidated Sections of Law 101, which was passed by the Quebec National Assembly. In doing so, it has brutally denied Quebec's right to decide its own language policy.

If the PQ were really committed to the political liberation of Quebec, it could have asked the following question: "Do you

grant the government of Quebec the exclusive power to decide Quebec's language policy independently of the Supreme Court and the federal government?" If that were



Quebec Premier René Lévesque.

the question, we believe the labor movement could campaign for a "yes," because it would concern a specific measure pointing the way toward Quebec's national liberation—although on a very limited question.

But the PQ government will not pose this question, because it refuses to take unilateral action against the federal state. Instead of defying the ruling of the federal court and maintaining Law 101 as it stood, the PQ government bowed to this insulting decision and scrambled to adopt an emergency law to conform to it. Of course Lévesque used the occasion to hurl a few bitter denunciations at federalism. But he gave in. That's the key political fact. That's how the PQ fights for Quebec's national liberation.

#### **Struggle Between 'Social Blocs,' or Class Struggle**

The authors of the CFP document on the referendum would probably agree with what we have written so far, at least with its general thrust. Nevertheless, they advocate critical support to the "yes" position in the referendum.

They correctly point to the fears about the PQ's plan among the Canadian capitalist class. This ruling class wants nothing to do with sovereignty-associations, no matter how watered down. Their class interests in this period of crisis impel them to seek even greater centralization of government powers. They have no desire to let Quebec have the least bit more authority in existing federal jurisdiction.

But the Canadian ruling class does not fear sovereignty-association as such. The crisis of the Canadian state arises from the refusal of the Québécois to accept Ottawa's domination, not from the plans of this or that party. Determination to resist national oppression has grown with the rising curve of Quebec labor struggles in

the 1970's. By bringing this movement under its leadership, the PQ was able to propel itself into power after only eight years of existence.

The CFP document advocates a "yes" vote on the basis that it would mean a defeat for the imperialist bourgeoisie and would open up a period favorable to mass action:

"Obviously the best strategy would be for the workers movement to assert its independence in the present battle. It should clarify its fundamental objective (socialism) and its political strategy (independence), and affirm its tactical support for a 'yes' vote on sovereignty in order to perpetuate the Canadian political crisis and increase the pressure on the social bloc influenced by the PQ."

There are a lot of political errors in that one sentence. A "yes" vote, we are told, will deepen the crisis of the Canadian state. That's very possible. But didn't the PQ's election in 1976 deepen the crisis? Was that a valid reason to vote PQ? The dangers in this argument are obvious.

But in any case our central concern is not to deepen the crisis for its own sake. Our concern must be how to impose a working class solution to the crisis. Without such a solution, the crisis could continue for a long time, fed by the rotting capitalist system. There is no guarantee that it would end to the advantage of the workers movement. The 1930s should have taught us that lesson.

How would a "yes" vote help the workers movement to "assert its political independence"?

The PQ's most recent retreats on the national question have raised new questions among many of its supporters. Many are quite clear that the PQ is no longer independentist, if it ever was. The need for an alternative is directly posed.

Rather than "increasing pressure on the social bloc influenced by the PQ," calling for a "yes" vote helps enable the PQ to carry out this right turn without suffering a serious split to the left. By acting this way the workers movement would be subordinating itself to the PQ government. It would be helping to convince the most conscious, and combative layers of the working class to swallow the PQ strategy. It would be giving up its independent role.

The PQ is asking for a mandate to negotiate with the federal state—a mandate to make whatever concession the government deems necessary. Voting "yes" means giving a blank check to the PQ government to sell out the national demands of the Québécois. That is the political meaning of the referendum.

#### **Independent Labor Action**

On the other hand, a vigorous campaign waged by the trade union movement for independence in the interest of working people, for abstention, and for a workers party, could open the door to independent

working-class political action—the only way to put an end to capitalist exploitation and national oppression.

In our opinion, the political task is the struggle within the unions for the formation of a workers party launched by the trade unions. Counterposing a class alternative is the way to finally end the PQ's hegemony within our ranks and to struggle to unite all working people around the labor movement and its political party. This strategy is irreconcilably opposed to the PQ's. It will be successfully achieved on the ashes of the PQ.

We cannot allow ourselves to be intimidated by the blackmail about a "no" victory. Suppose that a trade union campaign for independence in the interests of working people and for an abstention on the referendum tipped the balance in favor of a "no" vote victory. The major political event would not be the "no" vote victory but the fact that the labor movement had stood up in opposition to the PQ. This would worry the capitalist class much more than a "yes" vote accompanied by total PQ hegemony.

#### The 'Lesser Evil' Leads to an Impasse

Then we hear something we've heard before: "All that is well and good, but you must realize that there will be neither a workers party nor any independent political intervention by the labor movement during the referendum. The battle will take place between the federalist camp and the camp of the sovereignty-association negotiated by the PQ. We cannot escape that polarization whether we like it or not. One of these two camps will win the day. We must examine which result would be the most favorable for the workers movement."

We reject this approach. It is tantamount to accepting the framework that the PQ is trying to impose.

One of the reasons why the Quebec labor movement still has no independent political expression is that at each new stage, partisans of critical (or uncritical) support appeared for this or that bourgeois force whose victory seemed desirable. In the 1950s the advocates of a workers party collided with those in favor of critical support to the Liberal Party to bring down Duplessis. The scenario repeated itself with the PQ. At every new stage some threatening force appears whose defeat becomes a priority—even at the hands of a bourgeois force.

After the referendum the provincial elections are coming up. We can feel it coming: they will point at the bogeyman Ryan to justify the worst compromises. This is a dead-end.

The struggle for class independence will not wait. It must be built through events in the class struggle today.

We must be totally involved in these events and be prepared to swim against the stream if necessary. This is the only

way to break out of the vicious circle described above, in which the workers movement always finds itself disarmed. It is the only way for the labor movement to take the political initiative instead of al-

ways submitting to situations determined by others. And it is also the only way to pull the Quebec national liberation movement out of the quicksand the PQ has led it into. □

## How They Reported on Kabul Events

# Beware Press Lies About Afghanistan!

By Steve Potter

[The following article is reprinted from the March 6 issue of the British weekly *Socialist Challenge*.]

\* \* \*

A funny thing happened to "Journalist of the Year," Robert Fisk, in Kabul. This is how he tells it:

"Not long ago, the Voice of America radio, broadcasting from Washington, reported fierce fighting in the centre of Kabul. Afghan soldiers, the station announced, were in conflict with Soviet troops at the Bala Hissar fort in the centre of the city.

"It happened that I was listening to the broadcast as I stood on my hotel balcony which overlooks Kabul, and I naturally directed my gaze towards the Bala Hissar. . . .

"But there was no smoke or fire, no sound of car horns from the city's traffic. Nor was there any fighting. The Bala Hissar was peaceful. There were no Soviet troops to be seen and the Afghan army . . . was evidenced only by a soldier drinking tea in the main street. . . . Not to put too fine a point on it, the Voice of America was talking rubbish." (*The Times*, 11.2.80.)

The two main sources for the Voice of America broadcasts have been "travellers passing through Afghanistan to Pakistan" and "senior diplomats in Kabul." The former were credited with the following story which appeared in the *Sun* and *Daily Telegraph* on 28 February as the result of a despatch by United Press International (UPI):

#### "1,000 killed"

"Travellers from Afghanistan claimed in Pakistan yesterday that more than 1,000 people had been machine-gunned to death in Kabul in reprisal for last week's anti-Soviet riots."

The same day, however, Robert Evans, a reporter for the rival press agency Reuters, reported from Kabul:

"In the past week correspondents in Kabul have consistently found foreign radio broadcasts based on insurgent accounts issued in Pakistan on the situation in the city to be very inaccurate."

Evans went on to pour scorn on reports of massacres as reprisals for the riots,

pointing out that it would be unlikely that either the Karmal government or their Soviet advisors would be so stupid.

What about the other main source: "senior diplomats"?

The most intensive press briefings given by diplomats are, not surprisingly, those carried out by the US Embassy in Kabul.

This is what Ian Mather, one of the two correspondents for the *Observer* in Afghanistan, said about these briefings:

"The American Embassy here . . . has been feeding wildly inaccurate information to American journalists, exaggerating the number of Russian troops in the country, the number of Russians killed, and the extent of the engagements." (*Observer* 20.1.80.)

There has not been time yet to sort out truth from lies about the so-called "general strike" that was reported to have taken place in Kabul ten days ago.

The only generally agreed facts, both in the Western and Soviet press, were that there was a shut-down by merchants in the bazaar; that there was disorder in the streets; that the Afghan authorities imposed a state of martial law; and that one American and sixteen Pakistanis were arrested on suspicion of being foreign agents.

The term "general strike" only started to be used when it was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* on 25 February that civil servants had joined the shutdown. This report was not confirmed by other British newspapers which appeared that day, nor was any source credited.

If large numbers of state employees had joined the street protests then it would have been a major reversal for the Karmal government, since it is generally acknowledged that one of the main sources of support for his party—the Peoples Democratic Party—come from this layer of the population.

Neither should we forget that the only political forces which claimed responsibility for the rioting in the cities have been the Islamic fundamentalist parties whose first aim is the removal of the Russian troops as the precondition for purging the left and reversing the reforms started in April 1978. □

# The Changing Forms of the New Economic Policy in China

By Pierre Rousset

While continuing to pursue their policy of the "four modernizations," the Chinese leaders have been obliged to revise downward a whole series of objectives. Confronted with bottlenecks in transportation and energy, and with growing tensions in the countryside, they have found themselves forced to moderate their plans for investment in industry, as well as plans—associated with the projected investments—to import technology from the imperialist countries.

Overall, the program of readjustments adopted by the National People's Congress in June 1979 would reduce the planned expenditures on the "four modernizations" between now and 1985 from \$600 billion to a figure between \$280 billion and \$360 billion, that is, by a little more than half. (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 5, 1979.)

The projected growth rates in some sectors of heavy industry have been sharply reduced. The goal of 60 million tons of steel annually has been abandoned. In 1979, coal and steel production remain virtually stagnant at the 1978 level. But production of industrial consumer goods has increased.

In 1978, Chinese imports totalled \$10.3 billion (an increase of more than 50% over 1977), involving a modest deficit of \$300 million in the balance of trade. A massive new increase in imports had been projected for 1979. The total was to rise to 15.5 billion, with the trade deficit reaching 3.5 billion. Prudently, the figure for total imports seems to have been cut to 13 billion, leaving virtually no trade deficit (according to the official Chinese sources; Western sources talk about a deficit of \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion).

All these figures are far removed from

the grandiose projects talked up in imperialist circles when the policy of the "four modernizations" was finally gotten underway. In the last analysis, only Japan managed to gain a significant additional market in People's China, something comparable to the West Germans' *Ostgeschäft* [East European business].

Moreover, Japan got these results by providing large amounts of credits. (A first installment totalled about \$1.5 billion. It was for five projects involving improving the infrastructure and production of coal, to be repaid largely by deliveries of coal.) The interest on this loan was only 3%. Other proposals for credits are under discussion.

As regards the other imperialist countries, their exports to China remain very modest. They hardly make up for the stagnation or slight decline in the supplementary markets gained in the USSR and East Europe.

It is probable that all these adjustments are the result of the changes that the Deng Xiaoping/Hua Guofeng team was obliged to make by the beginning of 1979, in view of the growing imbalances in the Chinese economy as a whole.

The enormous gap between the living standard of a large section of the Chinese peasantry and the city dwellers, which widened further as a result of the modest rise in wages in 1977, had become an impediment to increasing agricultural production, and a cause of growing bitterness and discontent in the countryside. And increasing agricultural production was the basis of the whole "four modernizations" plan (the goal of 400 million tons of cereals by 1985 has already had to be abandoned).

The government, therefore, decided in

March 1979 to increase the price it paid for agricultural products by 20%. This would have increased the income of peasants by about \$4.2 billion. (These figures by themselves do not tell us much because money income per producer varies enormously among the People's Communes, going from 0.1 to 3 yuan a day.)<sup>1)</sup>

On November 1, 1979, to compensate for these additional state expenses, the prices of a series of consumer goods were raised considerably for the first time since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. These increases were 33% for meat and fish and 32% for eggs, while the increases for poultry and milk varied from region to region. These price increases should bring the state an additional 5 billion yuan, or \$3.2 billion in income. The \$1 billion more that is needed to cover the extra payments to the peasants would come from increasing export prices (the price of exported oil is going from \$21.8 to \$24 a barrel), as well as from higher prices in restaurants, in stores for foreigners (up by more than 100%), and for such things as consumer durables.

In order to partially neutralize the effects of these higher prices on the real income of workers, a sort of cost-of-living bonus of 5 yuan was introduced for each wage earner. Moreover, a new wage increase has been promised (but not yet decided on).

In fact, social inequality has increased. A correspondent writing in the November 5, 1979, issue of *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* has estimated that a family of four persons with an income of 100 yuan a month is capable of saving 20 to 30 yuan out of that. The Chinese press mentions big increases in bank savings. The foreign experts get 500 yuan a month. The supply of consumer durables is clearly increasing, and these are destined for those who get high wages.

However a great many blue- and white-collar workers earn less than 80 yuan a month (the minimum wage is 30 yuan). A savings account is out of the question for them. They are threatened with a drop in their living standard, especially if they have a number of children. Meat rationing has been abolished. But eggs are more strictly rationed than before.

Another indication of the increasing social inequality is the growth of the black market, especially in Guangzhou (Canton)—which is influenced by Hong Kong—but also in Shanghai. This is accom-

## Exports to the Workers States as Percentage of Total Exports of Imperialist Countries

Country	USSR and East Europe			China*		
	1977	1978	1979	1977	1978	1979
USA	2.1%	2.6%	2.7%	0.1%	0.6%	0.8%
Japan	3.4%	3.3%	3.4%	2.8%	3.5%	4.2%
W. Germany	5.6%	5.4%	5.0%	0.5%	0.8%	0.9%
France	4.4%	3.8%	4.3%	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%
Britain	2.5%	2.6%	2.5%	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%
Italy	5.1%	4.3%	3.5%	0.2%	0.5%	0.6%
Sweden	5.0%	4.5%	4.2%	0.4%	0.7%	0.7%
Austria	14.5%	13.7%	12.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%
Spain	2.8%	2.7%	3.1%	0.2%	0.5%	1.0%

\*For some countries this also includes exports to North Korea and Vietnam.

Source: *Perspectives économiques de OCDE*, No. 26, December 1979

1. At the official rate, 1 yuan equals US\$0.64.

panied by the opening of stores where foreign products can be bought (especially tapes and tape recorders from Hong Kong) for foreign currency but not for yuan (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 14, 1979).

The scourge of unemployment especially among youth is a second source of tension, along with the low living standards in the countryside. This is being accentuated by the return of about half the 12 million young people deported to the countryside at the end of the "cultural revolution." A semiofficial source has estimated the number of urban unemployed at 10 million. The government is boasting that in 1979 it created 450,000 more jobs in Shanghai, 320,000 in Peking, and 240,000 in Tianjin. But these figures include a large number of additional recruits to the army. Since technologically advanced industry employs a relatively small labor force, there was an additional reason to redirect budget allocations and investment to light industry, agriculture, and the services and to prevent a concentration of financial resources in modern and heavy industry.

The establishment of neighborhood craft and trading cooperatives is encouraged. Three thousand cooperatives of this type are supposed to have been created in

Peking in 1979, providing jobs for about 120,000 youth as tailors, street sellers, and workers in all sort of repair shops. These repair shops lost their licences during the "cultural revolution" and have now been relicensed.

Two other "unorthodox" outlets have been envisaged as ways of absorbing the surplus workforce. The government plans on renting out Chinese laborers to capitalist enterprises engaged in public works in the Mideast, specifically Italian and South Korean companies. Moreover, "free zones" have been created for the formation of mixed companies (half Chinese, half foreign), for example in Chum-Town which is near Hong Kong.

Four to five hundred projects financed by Hong Kong capital have already gotten underway, as well as some projects financed by Japanese and overseas Chinese capital. However, in general, the plants involved are of modest size.

On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account that essential goods and services (in particular, rents) are much cheaper in the People's Republic of China than in Hong Kong.

To get an idea of how low Chinese wages are, it is sufficient to note that in these mixed companies, as a result of the piece work system, wages are three times higher

than the average in the People's Republic, but they still are less than half what a skilled worker earns in Hong Kong. (*Economist*, December 29, 1979.)

The impression that a full-blown NEP is being envisaged is strengthened by the sharper and sharper criticism in the Chinese press of the People's Communes. According to the issue of the *Economist* cited above, in Sichuan province, where 10% of the population of the People's Republic lives,<sup>2</sup> the Communes are being transformed into purely administrative units. Production teams of thirty to fifty families are being made the basis of work organization, even when this involves going beyond the boundaries of the Communes. These teams are supposed to be pretty close to the producers cooperatives functioning in capitalist Europe.

The general impression that prevails, moreover, is that within the system of People's Communes, production will increasingly rely on the *work teams*. (The People's Communes are based on a three-tier system of organization—the *team*, which includes a few families; the *brigade*, which corresponds roughly to the village; and the *People's Commune* itself, which comprises several villages.)

In addition, an intensive investment program has been undertaken in the agricultural sector, in particular in the production of chemical fertilizers.

The reason for this effort is that the Chinese leaders are frightened by the relative stagnation of cereals production. According to American sources, it only went up from 284 million tons in 1975 to 310 million tons in 1979, while the population increased at a faster rate. And a semiofficial source has even said: "In 1977, the average per capita consumption of cereals fell back to the 1949 level. (*Le Courrier des pays de l'Est*, July-August 1979.)

A slightly larger area has been allotted for private agricultural plots, which now account for only 7% of the arable land but bring in 30% of the peasants cash income. However, the "New Economy Policy" in agriculture places its main emphasis on the cooperatives, in which there are simultaneous "material incentives" for teams, families, and individual producers.

A similar narrow pragmatism can be seen in the fact that the Chinese leadership has chosen to use Hungarian or Liberman style so-called self-management techniques, rather than the Yugoslav model (whatever its limitations). It is not the producers collectives, the workers assemblies, or elected workers councils that are getting more rights, but rather the enterprise managers. □

2. The capital is Chongqing, which was the capital of China under Chiang Kai-shek during the Sino-Japanese war. Deng Xiaoping is from this province.

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## Britain Imposes Inhuman Degradation at Long Kesh Prison

[The following interview was given to Gerry Foley in Belfast on January 26 by Ned Brown and Fra McCann, former republican prisoners recently released from the H-Block of Long Kesh concentration camp.

[The H-Block gets its name because it is built in the shape of an "H." It is in here that Irish prisoners jailed for political offenses alleged to have taken place after March 1, 1976, are kept.

[The British colonial authorities decreed in 1976 that the situation in Northern Ireland had been "normalized" and that henceforth all persons convicted of offenses against "law and order" would be considered common criminals.

[When the British authorities abolished political status for prisoners, however, they did not abolish the special juryless courts that were set up to try alleged terrorists. Since 1976, these "Diplock Courts" have sentenced many hundreds of young nationalists to long prison terms, most of them on the basis of statements extorted in the special interrogation centers such as Castlereagh that have been set up to deal with "political offenders."

[The nationalist prisoners who refuse to accept convict status are kept in the H-Block of Long Kesh. These are supposed to be special punitive cells for prisoners who refuse to conform to prison regulations, thereby losing all the "privileges" of regular inmates. Practically all the nationalist prisoners come under this category. So, they are obliged to stay in their cells almost continually with no clothing, except for a blanket, at best.]

*Fra McCann.* I was arrested on November 17, 1976, charged with membership in the Irish Republican Army [IRA] and possession of a gun. On June 28, 1976, I was sentenced to three years in prison. Had I conformed to prison rules, I would have been released after eighteen months. But because I was what they call a non-conforming prisoner, I served the full three years on the blanket.

Since I was under twenty-one at the time and had less than three years (my time on remand was deducted from my sentence), I was classed as a short-timer, as was Ned. Short-timers were supposed to serve their sentences at Crumlin Road Jail rather than Long Kesh. So, that's where we started.

*Ned Brown.* I was arrested on July 11, 1977, charged with throwing a blast bomb and membership in the IRA. On November 8, 1978, I was sentenced to two years. The court consisted of one judge. There was no jury. That is what a Diplock Court is.

After I was convicted I was taken back to Crumlin Road, where I had been held on remand. They asked me did I want to wear the prison uniform. I said no. Then they took me to a cell in B-Wing. They took all my clothes off me. They gave me a blanket to wrap around.

Then I was charged with refusing to wear a prison uniform and comply with prison regulations. My bedding was taken out of the cell for three days. All my blankets were taken out also. I was left naked for those three days. I had no one to talk to. I had no reading material. I had no cigarettes.

The food was extremely poor. The food in Long Kesh was even worse.

We never got out of the cell except once a week for a shower, for which we got twenty minutes. We were refused the right even to attend religious services. We got one visit a month.

On August 4, 1977, we heard that our comrades in Long Kesh had gone on a no-wash strike. We decided to join them. We refused to clean out our cells or dump our chamber pots. We found that within a couple of hours, we were on our way to Long Kesh.

*Q. Why did the men in H-Block refuse to wash and clean out their cells?*

*Brown.* The only sanitary facilities were a chamber pot and what they call a water gallon—it's a plastic container. It's supposed to be changed once a day.

Before the no-wash protest started, you got out in the mornings to wash yourself. But you had no time to do it in. For example, you had two minutes to take a shower in cold water. The screws were coming and pulling men out of the showers because they had taken more than two minutes. Men were taken back to their cells with soap in their hair and with their bodies covered with soap. They were allowed only a couple of minutes as well to go up to the sink and have a wash.

Because of the brutality and the harassment that the men suffered, they decided that it would be best not to take showers. They decided also not to take water into their cells. They were given only enough to be an inch deep in the basin, and two men had to wash in it. The basins were filthy, and the water was cold.

The screws were giving the water at the same time they were giving the breakfast, and at the same time they also wanted you to clean out your cell and to slop out. And as we were bringing our chamber pots to the toilet, the screws were standing along the corridor and waiting on you coming

and hitting the chamber pots, until they were more or less throwing the urine and excrement on the ground and all over the men. Once it spilled onto the ground, the screws tried to force the men to clean it up by beating them.

*Q. That is, the cleanup became mainly an occasion for the guards to harass the prisoners.*

*Brown.* That's right. That's what it was.

*McCann.* The men decided that if the screws came around with a bucket, they would empty the chamber pots into it. But after the first two days, the screws stopped coming around. Therefore the pots were overflowing.

The only way the men could get rid of the urine and excrement was to put it into the boots of the prison uniform that is kept sitting in the cells and then empty it out the windows.

Then the screws started coming into the cells on searches. They kicked the chamber pots over the men's bedding. The screws refused to bring in dry mattresses and dry blankets, or let the prisoners dry the wet ones out. Therefore, the men would have to lie that night on mattresses saturated with urine, and with urine-saturated blankets.

The screws also threw excrement in the blankets, and then doubled them up and trampled on them. As a result, the blankets were filthy.

Then the screws took the boots away. So, the men decided that the only solution was to empty the urine out of the cell doors, so that the screws could squeegee it away down to the toilet drains. But the screws squeegeed the urine back under the doors. As a result, the mattresses were getting soaked again, since they lie directly on the floor.

The screws would come around, maybe at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, and squeegee the urine under the doors when the men were sleeping. Then the men would wake up at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning, soaking. The mattresses were basically just foam-rubber sponges, and you know how sponges soak up water.

So, the men had to sacrifice their bread every night and use it to build a wee dam at the bottom of the door, so that the screws could not squeegee the urine in.

With the excrement, the men threw it out of the windows. The screws came round at night with their shovels and lifted the excrement back in over the men when they were sleeping. The men were covered with excrement. Especially their hair was filthy with it.

The men then decided that instead of



throwing the excrement out, they would wipe it on the walls outside. The screws then came along with high-powered hoses and hosed down the walls outside. While they were at it, they also hosed down the cells with the men in them. In some cases, the water was built up four or five inches in the cells, and everything was floating about, the chamber port, the mattress, the blankets, and all.

So, the men decided that the only solution was to wipe the excrement on the walls inside the cells. This brought on the wing moves, which now take place once a week in the H-Blocks.

*McCann.* There's four wings in H-Block. They keep three of the wings occupied at all times, and they have one empty. They move you to a clean wing, and then move in the machinery and clean the dirty wing up. Sometimes, they do cleaning while the men are still in their cells.

Once they came in with a very strong disinfectant. Men were clinging to the windows trying to get air. Some of them collapsed. It was virtually impossible to get enough air into your lungs. So, the men had to break the windows.

Now, the wing moves have become an occasion for beating and harassing the prisoners.

*Brown.* Wing moves are made every Monday morning. The screws come to the cell door. They take one prisoner out at a time.

You have a small towel around your waist. The two screws grab you by each arm, and a third screw grabs you by the back of the neck, and they run you up to the other wing.

In the bar of the "H," which is where the administration offices are, there is a mirror about 5 by 11 inches sitting on the floor. Actually, it's on a sponge platform about four inches off the floor.

When you get there, they ask you to remove your towel. They then proceed to search your hair, search your ears, put their fingers into your mouth, lift your arms up, and search under your arms. You have to lift your feet up and let them see the bottom.

They then tell you to bend your legs and stand spread-eagled over the mirror. All our republican prisoners refuse to do this, because it is so humiliating. Then the screws start slapping you about the face, punching you about the head, and kicking you on the backs of your legs. They try to force you to bend yourself. Then, they grab you by the arms, and the two screws kick you behind your knees, so there is no way you can hold yourself up. So, when you are on the ground, another screw pulls your head back by the hair.

A screw comes behind you and raises the mirror into a position level with your back passage. Another screw holds a big flashlamp. He shines the flashlamp on the

mirror. Two screws pull the cheeks of your back passage open so that they can look up your anus. At different times, pens, fingers, and metal objects are used for this purpose.

*McCann.* Besides this, such searches are carried on when you go to and come from a visit, on your way back and forth to mass, and on random searches.

Every day, they carry out random searches of fifteen to twenty men.

*Brown.* When a man comes back from a visit, he's put in an empty cell for four or five hours. He's told to excrete on the floor, so they can check his excrement. If he doesn't do this, they come in with clamps and forceps. They force his anus open and then probe it.

*Q. How are your visitors treated?*

*Brown.* Your visitors also get a degrading search. In some cases, for example, women have been asked to remove sanitary towels. If they refuse, they are not allowed to see their sons, fathers, husbands, or loved ones. After they come through the search, they have to wait, maybe three or four hours before they are called for the visit.

While your visitor is talking to you, the screws stand behind you and talk among themselves and listen to everything you say.

You are not allowed to make any physical contact at all. And at the end of the visit, you are not allowed to kiss your visitor, even if it is your wife or mother. If you try to make any physical contact, they stop the visit right away.

*McCann.* When your visitors go up, the atmosphere toward them is very hostile.

## How Britain Tries to Hide Truth About H-Block

[The two former H-Block prisoners explained that the British government does everything in its power to prevent the truth about the conditions at Long Kesh from coming out. Here is what Ned Brown and Fra McCann had to say.]

\* \* \*

*McCann.* In the summer of last year, some journalists and TV were allowed into H-Block. They brought the reporters round the cells in an empty wing. They weren't allowed to see any of the prisoners who were on the protest. On that day, the food sort of improved.

But even then, when the reporters saw the food that the men were being served up, they were really disgusted. This was another propaganda exercise that backfired on the British government. One of the reporters said that he

The screws listen. It's very hard for a married man if he has anything personal to talk to his wife about.

The other thing is that when you have a visit, it's very, very hard to think about anything but what's going to happen to you when you come back from the visit. You know that you are going to get a beating, and so you mind's only half on the visit.

When you leave your visit, you are brought out of the visiting area down a long corridor. At the bottom they have a small book with all the details about your family. They ask you your mother's name, your father's name, your prison number.

We refuse to give this number. It is part of their attempt to criminalize us. And then they start slapping you about the face, punching you in the side, and kicking you in the shins, trying to force you into giving you number and criminalizing yourself. But we republicans refuse to do this.

*Q. Don't these filthy conditions lead to disease?*

*McCann.* Not as much as you would think. We suspect they gave us drugs with our food. Then, too, most of the prisoners are very young.

But many of the men suffer from worms. When the person living in the next cell to me was sleeping, I could see worms crawling out from his insides down his back passage. It's terrifying, this sort of thing, especially for him, lying in bed and having worms crawling over him.

We think that the worms are brought on by the kind of meat they give you. It is half-cooked bacon and liver.

*Q. What's the medical treatment like?*

*Brown.* Just before I was released, I

had spent fifteen minutes on the block and he became physically sick. He said he didn't know how anyone could spend twenty-four hours in it.

*Brown.* We are trying to get out the truth about H-Block. The British are trying to put out that there's nothing amiss going on in H-Block. But there is a British lord, Lord Longford. He has never been denied access into any prison. He is a famous prison reformer. But on two or three occasions he has applied for access to H-Block, and he has been denied. Amnesty International has also applied. They have been denied. The International Red Cross has applied. They have been denied.

And the Brits put it across that they've nothing to hide. If they've nothing to hide, why stop these people going in?

broke out in a rash that covered the entire top half of my body. I went to the doctor. We called him "Dr. Mengele," after the famous Nazi concentration camp. They never tell you what is wrong with you. When I went in, he said that there was no medical explanation for the rash on my body.

People suffer from severe headaches. I myself got migraine headaches about twice a week. I went out to the doctor. I was told that if I could get the other men in the block to keep quiet, the headache would go away.

Many of the men in H-Block are still suffering from wounds they got in the struggle. There is one person in H-Block who has only one leg. He lost the other in an explosion before he went into prison. He had an artificial leg. But the screws broke it. So, now when he goes about, he more or less has to hold the leg on.

Many people are still suffering from gunshot wounds. I was in a cell with one. He was shot in August 1976 by the British army. The bullet smashed the bone in his leg. They were going to amputate, but his mother wouldn't give permission.

So, they joined the leg on again, which meant that it was a couple of inches short. The doctor prescribed medical boots for him. He had the boots for about five months. Then the screws came in and took the boots off him, because they said they were a security risk. They took away his walking stick for the same reason.

Then there was Terry Kirby. Everything he ate, he vomited up. He was constantly losing weight. He was wasting away to nothing. And all they gave him was a kind of drug that puts you to sleep for about half an hour, and after that you wake up disoriented. They were just giving it to him to keep him quiet.

*Brown.* The only thing that Kirby could hold in his stomach was rice. We were given about four tablespoons of it a week. Everyone would have happily given him their rice, but the screws wouldn't have it.

In fact, the screws always give the men unequal portions to try to get them to fight. But we divide everything equally to avoid that.

*Q. What sort of people are the guards? I have noticed that there is a lot of advertising for prison officers on Northern Ireland TV. This job is supposed to give you training in social work, nursing—and dog handling.*

*McCann.* Most of them are Orange bigots. They have tatoos of the Red Hand of Ulster, the symbol on the Orange Ulster flag. They have other tatoos, UVF and UDA tatoos all over their arms. [The Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Defence Association are Orange murder gangs.]

*Q. Do you get anti-Catholic abuse from them?*

*McCann.* Yes. This happens particularly at 8:30 at night, when the whole wing says the Rosary together in Irish. The abuse we have to take from these people is unbelievable—the things they say about Our Lady, the Virgin Mary! They run up banging on the doors and turn machinery on.

*Q. Have you complained about this to the clergy?*

*Brown.* We have protested to the clergy on numerous occasions. In turn they have protested to the prison authorities, and they have told us that the authorities promised that it would stop. But it never has.

The screws tend to be drunk most of the time. They have a club in the prison where they go at mealtimes, and they get the drink there. There is no tax on whisky in the prison. Maybe that's one of the attractions of the job the TV doesn't mention. It's very cheap for them.

*McCann.* All you have in your cell is a Bible. It is completely ripped up after a few wing moves. Pages are ripped out of it all the time. We have complained to the clergy about this on numerous occasions. They have complained too. And they say they have got assurances that it would not happen again. But it just starts all over again, everytime there is a wing move.

*Q. The Bible is the only reading material you have?*

*McCann.* Yes. During the two and a half years I was on the blanket, I never saw a newspaper. They will not let you have anything to read or study.

*Q. How do you keep yourselves sane then, if you are locked up all the time in a dark, cold, filthy cell?*

*McCann.* Well, in the H-Block there are men who are fluent in Irish, the old language of our people. They teach Irish classes. You break a wing down into maybe three or four classes. Every couple of months, the screws come around and paint the walls of the cells white. So, we take the bit of metal off the prison trousers and you can use it to write on the wall like a pencil. So, that's the way we study Irish.

*Q. You have no books at all?*

*McCann.* No. The people who teach it do so out of their memory. They would give you, maybe, thirty words a day in Irish, plus a couple of phrases and a couple of grammatical rules. After a while, this just builds up, and you begin to speak it. The men like to speak it also because the screws cannot understand it.

*Q. Do you speak Irish now?*

*McCann.* Yes. I can converse in it.

*Q. So, the revival of Irish has become a reality in the British jails and concentration camps?*

*McCann.* Yes. We believe in our country, in the future of our country, and in the future of the Irish language.

*Q. This protest has been going on now for about four years. Are there still people in who have been on it that long?*

*McCann.* The longest one on the protest has been on it for about three years and four months. There are a lot that have been on it just over three years.

*Q. That's a terribly long time to spend under such conditions. How long do you think this protest can be maintained?*

*Brown.* No one really knows. In the last few months, they have adopted a policy of giving the men starvation diets. The people that I knew who have gone in have lost stones and stones of weight [a stone equals 14 lb]. I personally lost two stone in the time I was in H-Block.

*Q. Are there cases of malnutrition?*

*Brown.* I don't know. Contact is difficult. There is no way you can get a doctor in.

*Q. Are there people on the blanket protest who are not members of the republican movement?*

*McCann.* Most of the prisoners on the protest were never connected with anything. They were picked up and brought into Castlereagh interrogation center and forced to make statements. The average age of the people on the blanket is seventeen to twenty-one.

*Brown.* All the men on the blanket have republican views. They are not necessarily members of the IRA or Sinn Féin. It's just that their political views, their political beliefs, tell them that they are not criminals.

*Q. The first man released from H-Block was Kieran Nugent. He tried to tell his story in America. The U.S. government deported him. What do you think about that?*

*Brown.* We think the British government asked the American government to deport Kieran Nugent.

*Q. Is there a general feeling on the part of the prisoners that the American government is collaborating with the British.*

*McCann.* Yes. They gave the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] guns to shoot us dead with.

*Brown.* But 80 percent of the people in the Northern Irish ghettos support the H-Block men. About 50 percent do in the

South, but that is growing very quickly. We have sent former blanketmen and relatives to speak in many countries. The support is growing as people learn about

the conditions. But the situation is desperate. No one knows when men in H-Block will begin to die. It is important to make protests now to the British authorities. □

## Following Dispute Over Army Unionization

### Soldiers' Revolt Topples Surinam Regime

By Ernest Harsch

After eight hours of fighting, a group of noncommissioned officers seized power in the former Dutch colony of Surinam on February 25, overthrowing the regime of Prime Minister Henck Arron.

A country of 450,000 persons on the northern coast of South America, Surinam won its independence just four-and-half-years ago, in November 1975.

The rebellion in the capital of Paramaribo climaxed a year-long conflict between the government and about 200 noncommissioned officers, who were attempting to win recognition for a union that they had organized, the Bond Militair Kader (Bomika—Military Officers' Union). Led largely by sergeants in the 800-man army, Bomika agitated for higher pay and greater opportunities for promotion. The union soon came into sharp conflict with the government and the top army command, which refused to negotiate with the noncommissioned officers.

In the meantime, popular discontent with the Arron regime had grown, fueled by the country's economic stagnation, the growing impoverishment of many small farmers, a high unemployment rate, and revelations of widespread corruption among government officials.

In such a context, popular sympathy for the demands of the noncommissioned officers grew. Various labor unions and opposition parties declared their solidarity, including Centrale 47, the largest trade-union federation in the country. Donations poured into Bomika's headquarters in the capital.

As the dispute over union recognition

developed, Bomika became increasingly open in its political criticisms of the Arron regime and even began to question the army's role as an upholder of "law and order."

Last year, Bomika asked in a publication, "How can we remain willing instruments of a regime that reacts to conflict in a strict manner? Must we remain accomplices in the maintenance of the present regime, and thus in the continuation of the social and economic chaos that reigns in all sectors of our society? Can we rationally be expected to attack peaceful demonstrators who are expressing their dissent?"

On January 30, the government cracked down on the union, arresting three of its leaders, Sergeants Laurens Neede, Badressein Sital, and Ramon Abrahams. They were charged with mutiny and brought to trial.

The February 25 rebellion was staged a day before the Bomika leaders were due to be sentenced. At 3:00 a.m., the army headquarters at Memre Boekoe camp was attacked. The rebels then shelled the police headquarters in Paramaribo, which burned down to the ground. After several hours of resistance, the police gave up and were disarmed.

The sergeants who seized power established an eight-member National Military Council, which included the three arrested Bomika leaders, Neede, Abrahams, and Sital. Prime Minister Arron, who briefly went into hiding, was captured and then released under surveillance.

According to a report from Paramaribo in the March 4 issue of the Paris daily *Le Monde*, "The population greeted the overthrow of the government with satisfaction. . . ."

The Volkspartij (People's Party), one of the most influential leftist groups in the country, hailed the army revolt as a "progressive nationalist movement."

Although the National Military Council announced that the elections originally scheduled for March had been postponed indefinitely, it did set up a civilian administrative council, headed by Eddy Bruma, a bourgeois nationalist politician who played a prominent role in Surinam's

struggle for independence.

Unlike the Arron regime, which was based almost exclusively on the Creole people (those of African descent, who are about one-third of the population), the new regime claims to represent the "national interests of the entire population," including Creoles, Hindustanis, Javanese, and the smaller nationalities. The composition of the military council tends to reflect the nationality composition of the population as a whole.

In contrast to the popular reaction to the revolt in Surinam itself, the Dutch and American imperialists promptly expressed their fears that the overthrow of Arron could upset their interests in the country.

Both the Dutch government and parliament declared that they viewed the revolt with "great concern."

The U.S. State Department announced a day after the rebellion, "We are obviously



Junta member Ramon Abrahams.

concerned over the violence and the threat to the duly elected government of the country."

In actuality, Washington was more concerned over its own political and economic stakes. American firms are heavily involved in Surinam, particularly in the bauxite industry. Surinam is the world's fourth largest exporter of bauxite, and accounts for a quarter of the annual supply of the ore used in aluminum production in the United States.

Although the political course of the new regime is not yet clear, the revolt of February 25 is nevertheless another indication of the political and social ferment that is sweeping the Caribbean. □



March 24, 1980

# The NLF Comes to Power

By David Frankel

[Second of three parts]

Although South Yemen's struggle against British imperialism was overshadowed at the time by the escalation of Washington's counterrevolutionary war in Vietnam, it was a bitter fight. About 18,000 British troops were committed to the battle. In the rural areas, the British army bombed villages and fields and burned food stocks.

Fred Halliday quotes the following exchange in the British Parliament:

Mr. Warbey asked the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons he authorized the burning of food stocks in Radfan villages and the expulsion of the tribesmen and their families from the lands just prior to the sowing season. Mr. Thorneycroft: 'We are dealing with rebels, armed, equipped and incited from the Yemen. . . . It is inevitable that crops should suffer and food stocks be destroyed in the process of excluding the rebels from their settled area. We shall, of course, ensure that when these people submit to authority, they will not go short of food.' [Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans* (Penguin Books, 1974), p. 198.]

A description of the war in Aden was given in the Cuban journal *Tricontinental*:

The British and their local agents try to isolate the Arab quarters by building high walls covered with barbed wire. All entrances and exits are controlled by an interminable chain of checkpoints consisting of sandbag parapets, spotlights placed on top of observation towers, squads or companies of British soldiers with their red or black berets, armed with submachine guns and automatic rifles. Artillery-equipped jeeps and armored cars complete the picture of these checkpoints.

Although the checkpoints are generally stationary, there are also the mobile type: five or six British soldiers who with the help of large empty oil barrels unexpectedly blockade a certain street. . . .

But walls, barbed wire and checkpoints are not enough. In front of each building or store there is a red or black beret mounting guard with his finger on the trigger of his weapon. For their protection, the British do not trust even their own creation, the federal soldiers. The main avenues of Aden, the streets and suburbs are constantly patrolled, day and night, by trucks, jeeps and even armored cars full of British soldiers with weapons cocked. . . .

At the same time, foot patrols, generally composed of five British soldiers, march through the streets. . . .

The mobile and foot patrols indiscriminately stop any passing Arab. Britons or sepoys [Indians] are not molested. "Face the wall you pig," is the insulting order the Arabs receive, while rifles and submachine guns are aimed, naturally from a prudent distance. A British soldier searches the detained Arab carefully. Any complaint or attempt to protest is silenced by a kick, the blow of

a rifle stock or outright murder. [*Tricontinental* No. 2, September-October 1967, pp. 90-91.]

The British recorded 286 guerrilla actions in Aden in 1965. This figure was up to around 2,900—almost ten actions a day—in the first ten months of 1967. The NLF also built up its urban base of support by leading strikes and demonstrations in Aden, such as the January 1967 general strike commemorating the first British attack on the port.

Mukalla, a port of 45,000 about 375 miles up the coast from Aden, is South Yemen's second-largest city. Mohammed Mata', a



fifty-five-year-old laborer, described the way the workers organized there in an interview with Joe Stork of the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP):

At the time of the Sultan, as a laborer, we were worth nothing. I used to carry ten sacks of jawari on my back for maybe 10 fils (less than 3 cents). There were no lunch or rest breaks. . . .

I became an active member of the Workers' Federation before 1967, which of course had to operate and function in complete secrecy. We formed this group in order to make sabotage against the Sultan. And there was a sort of coordination with elements of the National Front and elements of the Federation. It had about 360 members, all secret members, just in the wharf area. There was also a group in Shihir (a smaller fishing village several hours to the east), but there was not coordination with them. [*MERIP Reports* No. 15, March 1973, p. 17.]

### Pressure from Cairo

Along with the British colonialists and their Yemeni collaborators, however, the liberation fighters faced another obstacle. By 1965 Egyptian President Gamal Abdel

Nasser was actively seeking a compromise with the Saudi regime in regard to the war in North Yemen. From Nasser's point of view, the struggle in the South was merely a convenient bargaining chip. But to use it in that way, he had to be able to turn it on or off—that is, he had to try to secure control of the organization leading the fight.

Relations between the Egyptian regime and the National Liberation Front (NLF) were further strained by the evolution of a strong left wing in the NLF that considered itself Marxist and that criticized Nasserism from that standpoint.

In January 1966 the Nasser regime sought to force a merger of the NLF and more conservative Nasserist forces and traditional tribal leaders. Three NLF leaders flew to Cairo and announced the formation of the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOS). From this time until the NLF consolidated its rule in South Yemen, the Egyptian news media attributed all anti-imperialist actions in the South to FLOS.

However, the NLF cadres in the South refused to recognize the merger and continued to function independently. The three leaders who had collaborated with the Egyptian regime in announcing the phony unification were expelled from the NLF.

Awad al Hamad, a leader of the struggle against the British in the crucial agricultural area of Lahej and later the NLF governor there, described his view of the fight with Nasserism in an interview in 1972:

I went to Cairo in 1957. The Egyptian Revolution had a great effect on me personally, and raised my consciousness as a nationalist. I was fond of reading and I read all kinds of political books. I understood why I had not joined any of the parties in Aden, with their ties to the sultans and the British. In Cairo I joined the Arab Nationalist Movement [ANM]. I returned to Yemen, the North, in 1958, and for the next four years we formed secret ANM cells. And I participated in the 26 September (1962) revolution against the Imam.

After that we Yemenis in the ANM separated ourselves from the ANM and formed the National Liberation Front, committed to armed struggle. I think the ANM was a bourgeois organization. I learned all its slogans by heart and they were completely chauvinist. But we organized in the South at that time too, in all the provinces. We infiltrated the tribal leadership and politicized the people from within. . . . I have fought on this land since Radfan, and from the beginning we have been totally dependent on the people here. The Egyptians helped us at first, but they tried to control us and we broke away from them. We became fierce enemies of the Egyptians. [*MERIP Reports* No. 15, pp. 13-14.]

### The NLF Comes to Power

Victory for the liberation fighters in South Yemen came in the summer and fall of 1967. The British colonialists had planned to leave South Yemen as they left Kenya and Malaya—after first smashing the mass anti-imperialist movement, and

with a government in power that could be relied on to protect imperialist interests.

With this in mind, the British convened a conference on the future of South Yemen in London in June-July 1964. There, the British rulers promised independence for South Yemen by 1968, but insisted on maintaining their military base. They promised "direct elections as and when practicable."

The NLF boycotted this conference. Although the population of Aden had grown to about 220,000, those eligible to vote in the October 1964 elections numbered only 9,000.

Despite the narrowness of its social base, the plan for a South Arabian Federation became even more important to the imperialists when the British announced, in February 1966, their intention of abandoning the base at Aden. The declining British empire could no longer support the kind of military establishment envisaged by its policymakers only a few years earlier.

Beginning in April 1967, British forces began pulling out of the towns outside Aden, leaving the defense of the local rulers to a mercenary force named the South Arabian Army (SAA). The British plan for securing a puppet regime was announced on June 20. It was summarized in the 1971-72 edition of *The Middle East and North Africa*:

The date of independence was to be January 9th, 1968. During the critical months following the grant of independence a naval force, including an attack carrier, was to be assigned to South Arabian waters; a number of V-bombers would also be stationed on the island of Masira. . . . In addition, Great Britain promised financial aid (for aircraft, amongst other items) and undertook to re-equip the federal forces with more modern types of small arms, field guns and armoured cars. A military mission would also be sent from Great Britain to advise the federal authorities. [*The Middle East and North Africa* (London: Europa Publications, 1971), p. 762.]

After reeling off this catalogue of death-dealing measures directed against the people of South Yemen, the author blandly continues: "In order to check the growing violence in South Arabia it was proposed to suspend trial by jury in respect of terrorist activities."

Happily for the workers and peasants of South Yemen, the carefully laid plans of the British rulers were never put into practice. On June 20, the same day that the British government announced its vision of the future, NLF guerrillas seized the capital of the Dhala emirate and confined the emir in his own prison.

Also on June 20, an uprising began in one of the main sections of Aden. The NLF

opened the prisons and held the area for thirteen days.

Between then and the end of November, the sheikhs and sultans in the hinterland fell one after another to the NLF offensive. The whole British plan for a South Arabian Federation was in ruins.

It was out of the question for the British to send back their army to try to reconquer the country. They tried to get the officer

corps of the South Arabian Army to step

Even under Shaabi, however, the NLF maintained its strongly anti-imperialist stance. Shaabi's new government proclaimed its intention of expelling British imperialism from the whole of the Arabian Peninsula, and declared its support for the Palestinian liberation struggle.

Although London had promised £60 million in aid, British policymakers quickly



British soldier moving against 1967 Yemeni nationalist demonstration.

in, but the SAA was honeycombed with NLF cells, and its officers chose to wait.

As the chairman of the federal cabinet, Sheikh Ali Musaid al-Babakri, said at the end of August: "it is a people's revolution and we cannot oppose it." On November 7 the SAA formally declared its support for the NLF.

There was nothing left for the British rulers but to get out. On November 30, 1967, the People's Republic of South Yemen was declared, and 128 years of British rule came to an end.

#### What Road for the Revolution?

The first government of an independent South Yemen was headed by Qahtan ash-Shaabi. Shaabi was a leader of the wing of the NLF that had always had a generally Nasserist ideology. While opposing British rule, Shaabi and his supporters also opposed any fundamental social changes in South Yemen.

changed their minds after the victory of the NLF. The only thing they were willing to do was to provide military advisers for the SAA, which remained intact after the victory of the independence movement. Dale Perry, a U.S. military attaché, was also sent in to work with the SAA.

Shaabi's position was greatly strengthened by the maintenance of the SAA. The imperialists hoped to back Shaabi against the left wing of the NLF until an opportunity emerged to replace the NLF as a whole. It didn't take long for the two wings of the NLF to come into conflict and for the role of the SAA to become clear.

By August 1967 the left-wing tendency inside the NLF had gained a stronghold in the Hadramaut region in the center of the country. The Hadramaut is a valley where underground waters and seasonal floods support a large agricultural population. It is linked to the port of Mukalla.

Militia brigades named The First of May

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and Che Guevara were set up there. The local NLF demanded the expropriation of all landlords; the nationalization of all capital, foreign and native, without compensation; and a "state of workers and poor peasants."

This left wing considered itself Marxist. An example of its stance was contained in a March 1968 issue of the weekly *ash-Sharara* (Spark), published in Mukalla.

Making the socialist revolution means transforming existing social relations and installing revolutionary social relations, in other words destroying the old state apparatus and building an entirely new one in its place . . . Shouts of indignation will rise from the ranks of the worried and hesitant petty bourgeoisie: but where are the competent personnel? By 'competent personnel' they mean people with university degrees. Our reply is straightforward: what we need are not bourgeois competences but devoted workers. The great historical experience of the workers' councils is there to prove that the working class can govern themselves without difficulty, without bureaucracy and without bourgeois 'competences.' [Quoted by Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans*, p. 230.]

### The Fall of Shaabi

Although the left was strongest in the Hadramaut, it had supporters throughout the country. In February 1968 Ali al-Beedh, the minister of defense and an NLF veteran, dismissed the twenty-eight British officers serving with the army.

"Discontent amongst the armed forces increased after the annual conference of the NLF convened at Zinjibar, east of Aden, in March 1968," explains the article on South Yemen in the 1978-80 edition of *The Middle East and North Africa*.

The more extreme elements in the NLF were reported to have put forward at the conference resolutions designed to force the Government of Southern Yemen further to the left—amongst them resolutions calling for the appointment of political commissars to all army units, for the strengthening of the NLF militia and for the creation of "popular guards". A demand was also made, it would seem, at this conference, for the establishment of popular councils in all six of the governorates of Southern Yemen—these provincial councils having the right to elect a supreme council which would control the affairs of the new Republic [page 822].

The NLF's Fourth Congress gave overwhelming support to the left and defined the NLF as "a revolutionary organization which represents the interests of the workers, peasants, soldiers and revolutionary intellectuals and adopts scientific socialism as its method of analysis and practice."

Leaders of the NLF's left wing explicitly rejected the kind of governmental alliance with capitalist forces proposed by Stalinist parties around the world. Abdul Fatah Ismail declared at the Fourth Congress:

A state capable of implementing the program of the socialist revolution is a new state built on the ruins of the old state apparatus. . . . It is a state of workers, poor peasants, and soldiers,

who exercise their dictatorship against the feudalists, rich peasants, and local and foreign capitalists. . . . To follow the path of bourgeois development is to fall into the trap of neocolonialism and counterrevolution. All the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that followed that path after their liberation from classical colonialism still remain subject to class exploitation from world imperialism and from the local bourgeoisie allied to imperialism. . . . The conciliatory attitude of the petty bourgeoisie is even more dangerous for the revolution than the openly hostile feudal-bourgeois alliance.

Following the Fourth Congress, the army arrested eight NLF leaders. Demonstrations broke out around the country, and Shaabi was forced to intervene and release the NLF prisoners. But he was successful in excluding the left wing from leading positions in the Aden organization of the NLF and in the government.

On May 14, 1968, sections of the NLF's left wing staged an armed uprising against the central government, seizing the towns of Jaar and Abydan, near Aden. Awad Omar Goban, a truck driver and a member of the NLF since 1966, described the regime's response in Mukalla:

The split started in the military establishments, where the right had infiltrated. The left realized that these were preparing to move against them, against the left. In fact, the army came in to seize and search our houses. As a result, a sister of mine has gone mad, because they searched without any kindness, kicking and smashing things in our houses. This was 27 May 1968. After they arrested us, a big mass demonstration took place in Mukalla against the right. The army had to come in and forced each laborer to say "I am a nationalist,"—to say that we were not communists. (*MERIP Reports* No. 15, p. 18.)

With the defeat of the NLF's left wing, proimperialist forces seized the opportunity to try to drive Shaabi from power as well.

Saudi-supported tribes revolted in two areas in June 1968, and a third rightist revolt broke out in Radfan, in this case

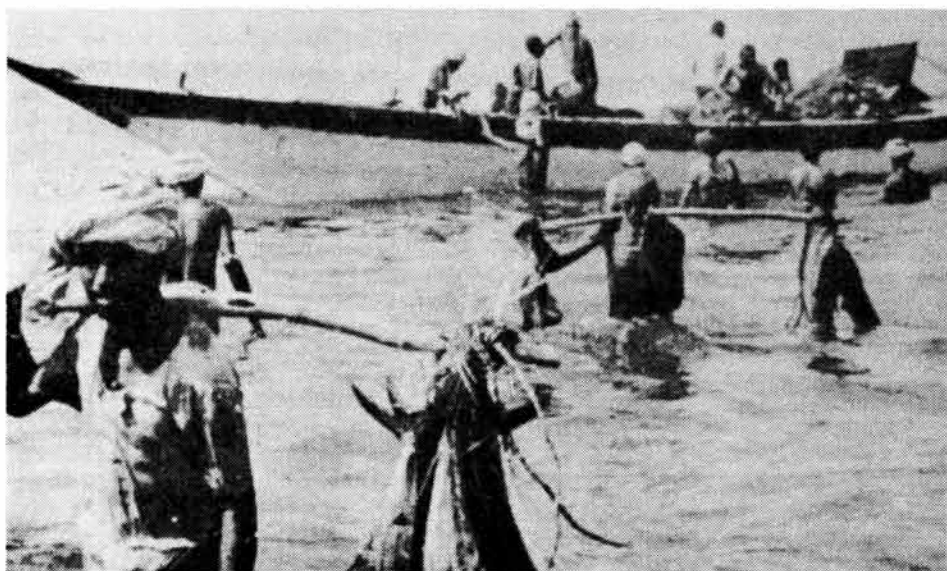
with encouragement from North Yemen. FLOSY forces crossed the border from North Yemen, and on August 2, 1968, the commander of the Southern security forces defected to North Yemen with 200 of his men and their armored cars. Also joining in this revolt was the former head of the South Arabian Army.

An account of this period in *Tricontinental*—which appears to have been written by one of the leaders of the NLF's left wing—describes what happened next.

In this difficult situation the sectors of the NLF which had taken up arms after the events of Jaar came out against the counterrevolutionary aggression and defended the sovereignty of the new Republic, although they continued to maintain their positions against the Government. But the aggression, the imminent danger, and the attitude of the rebellious sector of the NLF against the aggression led, in practice, to a truce between the different sectors of the NLF and the Government. Thus there began an interregnum which was favorable for the reopening of discussion, the evaluation of events, the internal situation in the NLF, and the future prospects for the South-Yemenite revolution.

The security forces were then reorganized chiefly around the politically trustworthy combatants of the NLF, an increasing number of whom joined the army as officers. Many combatants and other elements of the NLF, some of whom had risen in arms against the Government in May, also joined the process of reorganization, returning to the cities and, in some cases, to the General Command of the NLF. [*Tricontinental* No. 10, January-February 1969, p. 93.]

Using this opportunity to regroup its forces, the left wing was able to force Shaabi's resignation in June 1969. At this point the three central leaders who were to head South Yemen for the next nine years came to power. Salem Robea Ali, a veteran of the guerrilla war in Radfan, became the new president and chief of the five-member presidential council. Abdul Fatah Ismail, who was in overall command of military and political activity in Aden during the



Under British rule there was no investment in the fishing industry.

liberation struggle, became the new NLF general secretary. And Ali Nasser Mohammad, a cadre of the NLF since 1963, was named minister of defense.

### Heritage of Colonialism

This left wing of the NLF came to power in June 1969 in one of the poorest countries in the world, a country besieged by hostile neighbors on every side.

After 128 years of colonial rule, South Yemen had only fourteen miles of paved road outside of Aden. The quickest way to get to Abyan, an important agricultural area near Aden, was to wait for the tide to go out and then walk along the seashore.

Three Yemeni doctors served a population estimated at that time at about 1.5 million. Educational facilities, like health care, were virtually nonexistent outside of Aden.

Although South Yemen's 750-mile coastline borders on some of the richest fishing grounds in the world, the British did not invest one penny in developing a modern fishing industry. Lack of refrigeration meant that when a good catch was taken, most of it would rot. There was no way for fish to be distributed to the agricultural communities in the interior. Only a handful of rich fishermen had nets or motors for their boats.

In the agricultural sector, the problems posed by South Yemen's climate were compounded by the social relations encouraged by the imperialists.

South Yemen has no rivers—all agriculture depends on the runoff from seasonal rains, and there are only a few areas in the country where there is enough water to allow intensive cultivation. These are Lahaj and Abyan, near Aden, and the Hadramaut. The World Bank estimates that in 1977 the total area of cultivated land in South Yemen—a country with an area of about 112,000 square miles—was less than 300 square miles.

At the time of independence, more than half of this land was owned by the sultans and tribal chiefs propped up by the British. Peasants working the land with wooden ploughs were the victims of a mixture of serfdom and sharecropping.

Aden was the one developed enclave in the country. But Aden's economy was dominated by trade, transport, and finance—that is, the operation of the port—and the huge British military base. There was almost no industry. The British Petroleum refinery accounted for about 80 percent of industrial production. In addition there were some soft drink factories, a small ship-building and ship-repair industry, and outside Aden two cotton-ginning plants and a tuna processing plant.

On top of all these difficulties, South Yemen achieved its independence right on the heels of the June 1967 Mideast war. With the resulting shutdown of the Suez Canal, the monthly average of ships using the port fell from 560 to 115. This ferocious



Egypt's Nasser tried to make a deal on Yemen with Saudi King Faisal in 1965.

blow to the economy was combined with the abrupt closure of the base and the cutoff of British financial aid.

World Bank economists estimate that South Yemen's Gross Domestic Product dropped by about 20 percent between 1966 and 1968. Foreign exchange receipts dropped by more than 40 percent. More than 20,000 people were thrown out of work in Aden, and more than 80,000 Adenis emigrated in search of work.

Despite the tremendous economic pressures it faced, including economic sabotage by Britain and most Arab regimes, the NLF rejected any attempt to solve South Yemen's economic problems through a rapprochement with imperialism. The political stance of the NLF was expressed in the article in the January-February 1969 *Tricontinental* quoted above. It said:

The triumph of the South-Yemenite revolution has shaken the Arab world, especially the Arabian Peninsula. The Saudi monarchy, the feudal elements of North Yemen, and the emirs, sultans, and sheikhs who serve as lackeys for British colonialism in the Arabian Gulf states see the revolution as a death challenge. US imperialism, which is displacing the British and is carrying on strategies and tactics aimed at the absolute control of the region's petroleum wealth, sees the revolution as the chief obstacle to its objectives. . . .

The guerrilla movement in Dhofar, the political forces which are undertaking armed struggle in Oman, Muskat, Qatar, Bahrein, and other regions, and the revolutionary nuclei being developed in Saudi Arabia have an example to follow in South Yemen. [*Tricontinental*, No. 10, pp. 94-95.]

Turning to the question of the unification of Yemen, the article said:

The influence of the South is gaining ground in North Yemen, in the direct struggle against feudal and tribal forces which at present predominate in that country. The NLF has repeated many times that if both Yemens are really brothers in their history, geography, community, and idiosyncrasies, it is no less true that the political processes now taking place in both republics are very different and are an obstacle

to real unity. The NLF bases its policies on this fact. It maintains that unity with the North cannot be a constitutional unity, that the Arab world has seen too many failures of this type of union and integration, that integration must have a genuine political and revolutionary basis. In keeping with this analysis the NLF maintains that unity must begin with the masses, the integration and cooperation of social forces that can participate in and develop a revolutionary process in North Yemen. Thus, the NLF has a policy of close unity and collaboration with the students, workers, peasants, and progressive political forces of North Yemen.

On a number of key points, the new NLF government stood to the left of the Stalinist regimes in Moscow and Peking. Thus, it refused to recognize the Sultanate of Oman, which remains a British colony in all but name, and actively aided the rebellion there. When the Omani regime applied for admission to the United Nations in 1971, the only government to support South Yemen was Cuba, which abstained on the vote.

(In an interview with NBC television in September 1979, Abdul Fatah Ismail declared once again his government's support for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman, and said that South Yemen would not recognize Oman as long as foreign troops remain there.)

Support for the Eritrean liberation fighters in their struggle against the Ethiopian monarchy was also provided by the NLF. After the Ethiopian revolution, the NLF took a stance similar to that of the Cubans, calling for a negotiated settlement in Eritrea.

Diplomatic relations with the United States were broken off by the NLF in October 1969 to protest U.S. citizens being allowed to serve in the Israeli army. And the following month the new government in South Yemen announced its first sweeping economic measures. □

[Next: *How the NLF has used state power in South Yemen.*]

## Anti-Imperialist Mobilizations and the Development of Shoras

By Michel Rovere

The Iranian revolution was affected by an incredible paradox, a paradox whose political and social effects are still being felt. The shah's regime was defeated after the Iranian industrial working class entered into struggle—we recall in particular the importance of the oil workers' strike—in the course of the longest and bloodiest general strike in recent history.

But for various historic reasons, when the Iranian working class massively entered the struggle, there was only the embryo of an independent underground organized workers movement. This was because of the weight of the 1953 defeat and the Stalinist Tudeh Party's betrayal; the recent character of industrialization, which began in the mid-sixties; the weight of the industrial reserve army; and the police repression organized by the shah's regime.

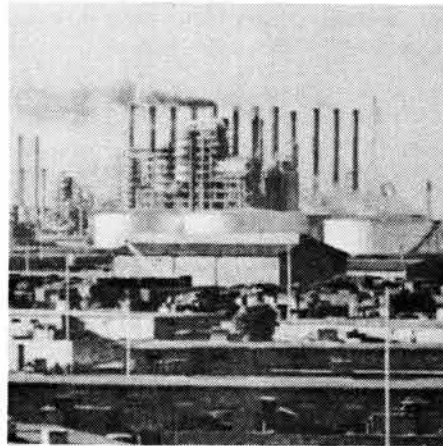
Between 1975 and 1978 there was a real rise in worker's struggles. But these struggles, which usually lasted only several hours or at the most several days because of the repression and the lack of an organized political intervention in the work places (on the part of the Tudeh Party as well as the guerrilla groups), were limited in character. In the atmosphere of police terror under the shah's regime these struggles did not lead to the organization of a semilegal, independent worker's movement, like the ones during Franco's last years in Spain or today in Brazil, where there is a movement of oppositionist unions and a current that has the perspective of building a workers party.

### A Series of Economic and Social Gains

Since the victorious February 1979 insurrection, this contradiction between the role of the working class and its lack of independent organization has deepened. This is due to the liquidationist policies of the Tudeh Party, which uncritically supports the Islamic Republic and its leader Khomeini, and the errors of the centrist groups, together with real economic and social gains for the most modern sectors of the industrial proletariat.<sup>1</sup>

The minimum wage has been doubled, representing a concrete economic gain, despite an inflation rate of 40% for this year. The workweek has finally just been reduced from forty-eight to forty hours by a decree of the Islamic Revolutionary

Council. In the nationalized industries, which now represent 70% to 80% of the industrial sector, the workers have civil service status.<sup>2</sup> The workers in these nationalized industries no longer feel the threat of layoffs and unemployment weighing on their shoulders. We can easily understand the chilling effect of the industrial reserve army on the combativity of the working class when we consider that



Abadan oil refinery.

out of an economically active population of 12 million people in Iran, there are, according to government estimates, more than 3.5 million unemployed who collect no unemployment compensation whatsoever.

In addition to the new social benefits that can vary from one factory to another, there has been an end to the atmosphere of terror, which was imposed on the shop floors and assembly lines by the existence of SAVAK agents and company unions.

It is enough to spend a few minutes walking around the floor of the General Motors assembly plant in Tehran, seeing the workers discussing politics along the stopped assembly line while sipping glasses of tea, to understand the kind of "nonquantifiable" improvements that the fall of the shah's regime has brought them.

These various factors allow us to understand why, from February to last November, the Iranian working class did not occupy center stage in the country's political life.

The repressive turn initiated by the regime last August—with the prohibition of all opposition newspapers, measures of

intimidation against the far left, the trial and death sentences of the HKS members in Ahwaz, and especially the military offensive launched against the Kurdish people—hardly extended into the factories, although there were some measures of intimidation and cases of selective repression—especially in the oil-producing provinces in the south—as well as a revival of employer arrogance.

The absence of massive repression and the inability of the Khomeini leadership and his Islamic Republican Party to use the political capital they had accumulated from their opposition to the shah's regime to develop tight organization and control over the workers' movement in the space of a few weeks or months—as had been the case in other populist experiences (Argentine Peronism and Brazilian Vargasism for example)—made possible the massive development of independent working-class organization. In major factories, *shoras* (committees) appeared and began to spread.

### In Face of the Economic Crisis and Capitalist Sabotage

The motor force behind this first phase of workers' independent organization, as has been the case in other revolutionary situations, was the economic crisis.

According to estimates circulating within the Iranian ministries themselves, industrial production is only 20% to 30% of what it was in 1978.<sup>3</sup> Non-oil exports are at one-third of their 1977-78 level, while imports are half what they were in that year.<sup>4</sup>

Capitalist sabotage, the exodus of profiteers of the former regime, the investment strike, the return home of foreign technicians, the initially covert and then overt imperialist economic war against Iran, and the disorganization and the resistance of the bureaucratic state apparatus<sup>5</sup> have also been factors accelerating the independent organization of the workers.

Contrary to its initial plans, in June and

3. This does not include oil production, which has dropped from 6.5 million to 3 million barrels per day, whereas the rise in prices and the premiums paid for Iranian oil assure an annual income of 23 billion dollars, compared with 18-19 billion in 1977-78. Despite the freezing of Iranian assets by U.S. banks, the increase in oil prices and the decline of imports has enabled the Iranian regime to rebuild its assets to \$12 billion and, according to Bani-Sadr, to have a surplus of oil revenue on the order of \$1.2 billion per month. (Figures taken from the *Tehran Times*, *The Iranian*, and *Iran Week*.)

4. *Financial Times*, August 15, 1979

1. According to Iranian statistics, out of two million industrial workers, only a little more than 200,000 are employed in shops with more than fifty employees.

2. This concerns workers with full rights. In several factories there are now movements demanding that probationary employees also be granted job security.





GM workers march in December 23 demonstration called by Islamic Workers Shora.

July the Bazargan government was finally forced to nationalize all the banks and insurance companies, and more than 75% of Iranian industry in order to avoid a total breakdown of the Iranian economy.

These nationalizations were sometimes undertaken by the workers themselves and often under their control. The nationalizations, in turn, facilitated increased political discussions in the factories, the development of independent organization, experiments in workers control, getting production started again, the opening of the financial books of the companies, the study of industrial patents, and even discussion of reconversion plans which tend toward a partial break with the capitalist profit motive, imperialist exploitation, and the effects of the international division of labor.

Today there are shoras in most of the large industrial units. These are factory councils or workers committees.

In this stage of the revolutionary process, the independent organization of the Iranian proletariat has not led to a real situation of dual power. In the best of cases, these shoras correspond to what existed in Portugal in the summer of 1975—workers commissions that are at one and the same time elementary structures of independent organization and substitutes for a nonexistent trade-union

5. The Iranian state, as is true in a number of semicolonial countries, has played a very important economic role, especially in industrialization, by using part of the oil income. Thus, in 1977 it directly secured more than 60% of the industrial investments. This doesn't count its role in the private sector's accumulation of capital through long-term, low interest industrial loans. Most of the private enterprises nationalized between June and July were nationalized to assure repayment of these bank loans.

## What Capitalists Fear About Iran

The February 23, 1980, issue of the *Economist*, one of the major mouthpieces of big business in Britain, indicates what capitalists around the world are so worried about in Iran.

Analyzing Iran one year after the revolution, the *Economist* points to what it terms the "chaos created in industry by workers seeking to run their own factories."

What the *Economist* is referring to are the factory *shoras*—committees often democratically elected by the workers—that have been spreading throughout Iran.

The *Economist* bemoans the fact that the workers "in the factories interfere in the management of plants and elect workers' councils to run them." The financial weekly is upset at the "Islamic militancy [that] incites factory workers against their capitalist masters. . . ."

What especially raises the *Economist's* ire is the "new Islamic economics"—that is, "a worker's right to the fruits of his own labour and to the means of production."

The *Economist* laments the nationalizations of private sector enterprises, the

measures taken by workers to prevent close-downs and layoffs, their arrests of industrialists, and their "discipline" of managers.

It objects to the "heady air of participatory mass politics" in Iran today, stating:

. . . the revolution has released powerful, and potentially disruptive, aspirations. It has spawned a plethora of political parties, interest groups and ideological schools that are locked in conflict. It has lit a blaze of revolutionary ferment that cannot be easily extinguished.

This is what frightens the capitalists. Under the old regime of the shah, they did not have to worry about the masses becoming involved in the political process. Since the revolution, the *Economist* complains, "the parties of the extreme left have fared better than the parties of the centre."

The capitalists are very much aware of the class polarization in Iran today. And, as the *Economist* warns, the bourgeois forces are at "a distinct disadvantage when the street crowd has become a lever in the political process."

Janice Lynn

movement (here too partially due to the liquidationist policies of the Tudeh Party).

In analyzing the shoras we must take pains to avoid any oversimplified generalizations about their significance. There are big gaps and important qualitative differences from one shora to the next.

In one place the shora may have been appointed by the employer or by representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Mines,<sup>6</sup> while in another plant it may have been elected by a general assembly of the workers. In some shoras salaried employees and white-collar workers are in the majority, while others are made up of rank-and-file industrial workers.

One shora may only meet for several hours every month, while another may have twenty-four hour control over the work of the factory. And in some places the shoras are purely Islamic, while elsewhere different political tendencies, including far left organizations, work together in the shora.

But bearing these differences in mind, if you consider the accumulation of experience—in terms of independent workers organization, political discussion, and workers control—you see the importance of the qualitative threshold that has been

6. Body that oversees the nationalized industries or those under "intervention," with the exception of the oil industry, which is under the direction of the Oil Ministry.

crossed, both in the sense of reconstructing the Iranian workers movement and in the rough outlines of a united alternative to the capitalist government and the bourgeois nationalist leadership, which are incapable of resolving the big questions of the Iranian revolution.

For the time being, a mass of unsettled questions about the *unity* of this movement obviously remain. These are linked to the question of this movement's *independence* with regard to the bourgeois state.

But it is important to note that the first forms of liaison between shoras have begun to appear in recent weeks, especially in Tehran. These links take the elementary form of joint demonstrations and the beginnings of simple coordination. This was shown in the demonstration of several thousand workers in front of the occupied U.S. embassy, called by the Islamic Workers Shora in Tehran,<sup>7</sup> and similar smaller demonstrations such as the one called by the unions at factories run by IDRO (an Iranian state-owned trust.)

The level of independent organization that has already been achieved defines the central importance for Iranian revolutionary Marxists of slogans calling for the expansion and centralization of shoras, the extension of their economic, social, and political prerogatives, and even their mil-

7. See the document printed in the January 14, 1980 *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, page 12.

itary prerogatives (militias), in direct relation with general propaganda for a workers and peasants government.

### The Peasant Question

Since the fall of the Pahlavi regime, peasant mobilizations have taken place only among the oppressed national minorities—in Turkmenistan, Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and partially in Arab Khuzestan. These were due to the interconnection between the national question and the land question.

Since the beginning of the year, however, there has been real agricultural seething in all the Iranian provinces.

Movements refusing to pay the government the annual installments on land that was distributed during the agrarian reform, refusing to pay off private debts, peasant demonstrations, and even land occupations are beginning to develop on a national scale—in Azerbaijan, in the Caspian Sea provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran, on the outskirts of Tehran, and near Isfahan and Shiraz on the Fars Plateau.

At the beginning of January a demonstration of peasants took place in Tehran for the first time. The demonstration was only 2,000 people. But its route from the U.S. embassy to the Ministry of Agriculture, its slogans ("Death to Carter" and "The land belongs to those who work it"), and its chants in support of a garrison of Pasdaran who refused to oppose land occupations ("Worker-Peasant Unity") are all indications of the political radicalization and the enormously deep wave that is beginning to sweep through the countryside.

These mobilizations could reach a new threshold over the course of the next few months. The government has not yet dealt with any of the big structural problems of Iranian agriculture:

- Land distribution. The shah's agricultural reform only affected half the cultivated land<sup>8</sup> while the ruin of the small farmers in recent years has accentuated the concentration of land, often on a speculative basis, in the hands of the former landlords or certain strata of the urban bourgeoisie.

8. See Behrang, *Iran, le maillon faible*, [Paris: Maspéro], p. 138.

9. See Cohen Hallaleh—"Le développement rural, attitude des paysans iraniens après la réforme agraire," EHESS Thesis, 1979, p. 268. Before the agrarian reform, credits furnished by middle-men, people who bought the harvests, small landlords, and local stores represented 17.45% of the total agricultural credits. After the agricultural reform, these sources represented 45.84% of the credit! At the same time the percentage of the credits furnished by the agricultural bank plunged from 75.31% to 29.73%. The interest rate ranged from 6% to 7% for credit furnished by the agricultural banks and the cooperative societies, to 40% when the money was furnished by the middle-men!

- The question of credit. Since the shah's "White Revolution" there has been a considerable increase in the percentage of total farm debt that is owed to usurers and landlords.<sup>9</sup>

- The question of agricultural prices. Last year the prices of agricultural goods rose somewhat, partly because of the drastic decline of imports. In 1977, Iran had

In addition, the low prices favored the accumulation of capital in industry. (This is a classical phenomenon. In a situation where a large proportion of a workers' already low wages must go to buy the necessary sustenance to reproduce the work force, the lower the agricultural prices, the lower wages can be kept, and the higher the average rate of profit rises.)



Shah's troops could not stop Iranian revolution.

imported \$4 billion of agricultural products. However, the structural problem has still not been solved.

The policies followed by the shah's regime of forcefully imposing very low agricultural prices was directly linked to the interests of the industrial capitalists. First of all, low agricultural prices encouraged the rural exodus and the creation of an enormous industrial reserve army<sup>10</sup> that would keep down the average level of workers' wages.

10. Two hundred and fifty thousand peasants left the land each year. Compare this figure with the 200,000 industrial jobs in factories with more than fifty employees at the end of twenty years of the "White Revolution" and industrialization.

This was the cause of the paradox wherein the Iranian government was financing the importation of wheat, paying on the world market two times the price on the Iranian domestic market, while the wheat fields in Iran were decreasing or stagnating, with the ruin of large numbers of small farmers who were unable to survive with the price paid for their harvest.<sup>11</sup>

### The Hesitation Waltz

And regarding these three questions—land distribution, credit policy, and agri-

11. See the article by Thierry Brun and René Dumont, "Iran des prétensions impériales à la dépendance alimentaire," in *Peuples méditerranéens*, No. 2, January-March 1978.

cultural price policy—eleven months after the new government took office it has still not made the smallest decision.

On the one hand, there is the vice-minister of agriculture who, worried about keeping up a good image, peppers all his speeches with resounding declarations about the need for agrarian reform. On the other hand there is the Islamic Revolutionary Council, which since December has been reminding everyone of the sacred character of private property according to Islamic law, and decreeing that the death penalty could be carried out against the instigators of land occupations.

We've seen Bani-Sadr begin to implement an important banking reform, with drastic reduction of interest rates. But, he never exactly said whether this would cover agricultural credits or by what criteria they would be divided between the small farmers and the large domains of agribusiness. And, we saw Bani-Sadr's economic staff spending its days figuring out an agricultural price reform, and finally deciding to decide nothing.

It is true, as is the case in the entire semicolonial world, that the agrarian question in Iran is a crucial question for the bourgeoisie. Any measures taken regarding land distribution, credit, and agricultural prices would directly affect the Iranian capitalists—beginning with the bazaar merchants—who are linked to the fate of real estate property by a thousand economic, family, commercial and speculative ties.

In the coming months, new economic difficulties could revive agitation by the poor peasants and agricultural workers. The year 1978 was particularly good in terms of weather. But the disorganization brought about by the revolution, in particular in the system of state cooperatives that provided fertilizer and seed to the peasants, is going to affect the outcome of the next harvest. In addition, the economic crisis—especially the total halt in construction, which represented 13 percent of the Gross Domestic Product—has forced peasants who went to the city to look for full-time work to return to the country, which will increase the pressure on the land.

The only thing now holding back a more rapid extension and spread of the peasant movements is the fear of confrontations with the Pasdaran and the national police. The Pasdaran was used against the land occupations in Turkmenistan and Kurdistan. And the national police, the principal counterinsurgency military unit—70,000 men strong—was the least affected by the political and military events of the February 1979 insurrection, which remained largely urban.

#### The National Question

With the struggles in Azerbaijan, marked by the various uprisings in Tabriz, the national question has also experienced an important resurgence.

It is true that the first incidents were sparked by certain election frauds pertaining to the constitutional referendum at the beginning of December. This was when the state television, controlled by Sadegh

provinces. The Azerbaijanis comprise 15 million Turkish-speaking people. In contrast to Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Turkmenistan, there is not a big economic gap between Azerbaijan and the Persian pro-



Ghotbzadeh, broadcast a false message from Ayatollah Shariat-Madari calling on his fellow Azerbaijanis to vote in the elections, when he had actually decided to boycott the referendum.

But even though the leaders of Shariat-Madari's party—the Muslim People's Islamic Republican Party (MPIRP)—tried to limit and contain the movement, the nationalist dynamic came through very clearly. During the confrontations in Tabriz this could be seen in the sudden appearance and development of small Azerbaijani nationalist groups using the MPIRP and the figure of Shariat-Madari as cover.

The execution of eleven MPIRP activists and of soldiers who had refused to obey orders, as well as the closing of MPIRP offices, served only to widen the breach, without being able to put a lasting halt to the Azerbaijani nationalist movement.

These struggles of the Azerbaijanis represent a turn in the evolution of the national question in Iran. First of all, this is due to the weight of these northwestern

provinces. Tabriz has one of the main concentrations of industrial workers in Iran.<sup>12</sup> The Northwestern provinces are much more integrated into the Iranian economy than are the other nationalities. The bazaar in Tabriz has close links to the bazaar in Tehran. This partially explains why there is an important pro-Khomeini minority in the bazaar that is opposed to the nationalist movement.

One result of the Azerbaijani upsurge, in the final analysis perhaps the most important, is that it carries the discussions on the national question right into the Persian working class. A large percentage of the industrial workers employed in the large Persian cities (Tehran and Isfahan) are, in fact, Azerbaijanis. (The Kurdish immigrant workers, in contrast, are basically concentrated in the construction industry, whose activity today is almost nil.)

In late December, Baluchistan and Seis-

12. It was there that the first large urban uprisings of the revolution began in February 1978.

tan<sup>13</sup> began to enter the struggle. There, as in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan before, it was extortion by the Khomeini committees and Pasdaran garrisons that ignited the flames. The confrontations between Baluchi guerrillas and *pasdars* resulted in the deaths of several *pasdars*.

The Arab province of Khuzestan is vital for its oil resources. Despite the strong repression the regime maintains in this area, the Arab nationalist movement is beginning to reorganize following the wave of repression last June and July when several hundred died or were wounded. (Fourteen Trotskyists were jailed in Khuzestan Province, in the city of Ahwaz.)

At the beginning of January an Arab demonstration took place in Khorramshahr, the site of the main battles last summer. The demonstrators demanded the return of the Arab community's religious leader, who is still being kept as a "guest" somewhere in Qum.

The rebirth of the Arab nationalist movement coincides with the resurgence of workers' struggles throughout this region, such as strikes and demonstrations in the oil and steel industries in Ahwaz.

One important mobilization took place in mid-January when *pasdars* opened fire on a sit-in of young unemployed high-school graduates who were demonstrating for work in front of the government offices in Masjed-e Suleiman, the city where oil was first discovered in 1908.

#### The Kurdish Fortress

And then there is Kurdistan, still unbroken in its struggle against the central government in Tehran.

Kurdistan is still where the struggle of the Iranian national minorities is most advanced. It was there that the revolutionary guards and units of the ex-imperial army suffered their first military defeat at the hands of the *peshmergas* (those who face death—the Kurdish guerrillas). This revealed the vulnerability of the bourgeois state apparatus that the government and the Revolutionary Council were doing their utmost to preserve and reconstruct.

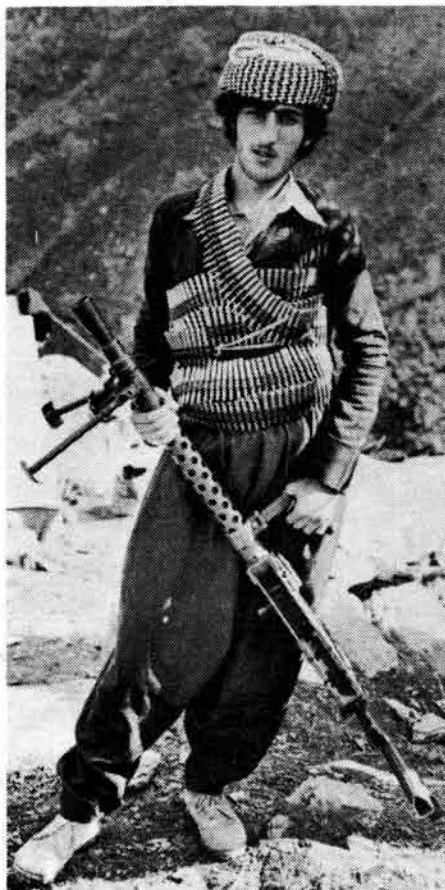
The nationalist movement in Kurdistan based itself upon a series of radical measures: the beginning of land occupations and the development of peasant shoras in certain areas last July and August, and, above all, widespread arming of the population. Since July and August, there has been a certain ebb in the peasant movement because of the conditions resulting from the war.

In Sanandaj and Mahabad today, where there are public arms markets, the only unarmed people walking around are the soldiers of the army. Their barracks have to be resupplied by helicopter.

13. Southeastern Iranian provinces on the border with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

As for the *pasdars*, they have literally retreated to their quarters, especially after the incidents in early January when they confronted the *peshmergas*. A general strike demanding the withdrawal of the *pasdars* from Kurdistan paralyzed Sanandaj and 7,000 people conducted a sit-in and hunger strike that lasted several days.

It is also in Kurdistan where the organi-



Guns are everywhere in Kurdistan.

zation and political expression of the mass movement is the most advanced. After a lot of beating around the bush, the negotiators from Tehran—sent by the Minister of Labor Darius Faruher—had to finally agree to sit down and talk to the Kurdish people's delegation. This delegation was made up of representatives of the nationalist Iranian Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP); two Marxist organizations, the Fedayeen and the Komaleh (the latter broke its Maoist connections and has evolved in a very interesting political direction); and members of the political bureau set up by Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini, who is the leading religious figure in Kurdistan. During the last internal discussions within the Kurdish resistance, Hosseini seemed to regularly side with the far left in their differences with the KDP.

Today, despite the differences of opinion on how many concessions to make to the representatives from Tehran, and despite a

geographic division of influence—the KDP controls Mahabad whereas the Komaleh has hegemony in Sanandaj—Tehran has had little success in breaking the united front of the Kurdish organizations.

Negotiations are now at a total impasse. After having retaken the main cities that were occupied by the army and Pasdaran last August, the Kurds unilaterally extended the cease-fire agreement after it expired December 19.

But there have been hardly any new proposals by the envoys from Tehran. They have refused to consider the twenty-six-point Kurdish plan and seem to be mainly concerned with gaining time.

Within the governing circles, among men like Bazargan or Defense Minister Mustafa Shamran—not to mention, of course, the leadership of the *pasdars* or the army officers, there is still a sector of hawks who are for a second war against Kurdistan. And certain Kurdish leaders, while publicly explaining that the Kurds want peace and a negotiated solution at any price, privately do not hide their pessimism. They fear there will be a new test of military strength with a regime that would like to use such an adventure to divert attention from its internal difficulties.

#### Occupation of the 'Spy Nest'

It was precisely after the decisive defeat of the government's military offensive against the Kurds in October, when Khomeini himself had to make a self-criticism and present his "apologies" to the "Kurdish brothers who were unjustly slandered," that the occupation of the U.S. embassy in Tehran occurred. It came at an opportune time. It offered the Khomeini leadership an "honorable" way out, allowing it to try to reunite around itself the ranks of the Iranian nation in the face of imperialist aggression.

So the occupation of the embassy obviously had a "maneuveristic" aspect to it. But before dealing with its consequences in terms of the development of the mass movement, the maneuver itself already sheds some light on the quite special features of this particular bourgeois nationalist leadership.

Here we have a bourgeois nationalist leadership that has already distinguished itself by its refusal—even during the course of a revolutionary process—to retreat from the central slogan "Out with the shah, out with the monarchy." When such a leadership begins to "maneuver" by taking responsibility for (virtually excusing) the military occupation of the embassy and the holding of the diplomats of the top imperialist power in the world, we have to recognize that this is a leadership that is lifting the barriers to confronting imperialism as few others have done in this century.

Such an analysis in no way implies that we are changing by one iota our opinion

regarding the *strategic* inability of this leadership to resolve the basic problems posed by the development of the Iranian revolution. This leadership has never stopped looking for a way to accomplish its class objectives—such as rebuilding the capitalist state and maintaining private ownership of the means of production.

But it also allows us to understand the special relationship the leadership still maintains with the mass movement, at least in the Persian provinces, and especially with those sectors that will be the motor force in an eventual socialist transformation of the Iranian revolution—the proletariat, the poor peasants, and the enormous mass of urban poor (the *mustazafin*).

But Khomeini's Machiavellian skill alone does not explain the impact and reverberations that the anti-imperialist movement has had throughout Iranian society, the enormous dynamic of the mass movement that surged into the breach.

Behind this situation there are objective conditions that allow us to understand how—at least for a whole period—the struggle against American imperialism has been the political theme making it objectively possible to unite the different arenas of struggle.

For the Kurdish and Azerbaijani national minorities, the memory of the liquidation of their autonomous republics in 1945-46 is directly linked to the effects of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements that left Iran in the Western sphere of influence and concomitantly put the Iranian army under the control of the U.S. military mission led by General Schwarzkopf—the same person who later organized the August 1953 coup.

The division of Baluchis between different states, especially between Iran and Pakistan, is directly linked to the imperialist dismemberment and reshuffling of borders that took place during the decolonization of India, the maintaining and encouraging of artificial borders between states.

We have seen how the various reactions by leaders of the different nationalist movements in Iran to the question of the confrontation with imperialism have had repercussions on the struggle itself.

The refusal of Shariat-Madari and the MPIRP leadership to take a position on the embassy occupation and on the confrontation with the United States has in fact facilitated the maneuvers of the followers of Khomeini, the Stalinists, and the Fedayeen centrists. These forces claimed that the upsurge in Tabriz was nothing more than a plot by the Iranian liberal bourgeoisie, supported by the Western powers, and they refused to recognize the Azerbaijanis' right to self-determination.

This facilitated division, not only within the Azerbaijani bourgeoisie, but especially within the Tabriz working class. A large portion of the working class remained

indifferent, at least for a certain period, to the nationalist demands; or they participated in the pro-Khomeini rallies and then in the demonstrations of the nationalist Azerbaijani groups as well, which shows the political confusion that reigned.

The Kurdish organizations, on the other hand, made the gesture—even if it was purely symbolic—of sending a message to the International Conference of Liberation Movements that was convened in Tehran by the Muslim Students Following the Imam's Line. This gesture contributed to combatting, at least to a certain degree, the prejudices of the masses of Persian workers and urban poor who believed that the Kurdish rebellion was nothing but a diabolical plot cooked up by imperialism, supporters of the shah, and CIA and Israeli Mossad agents to dismantle the Iranian state and endanger the Islamic revolution.

### **The Anti-imperialism of the Peasant and the Anti-imperialism of the Worker**

The anti-imperialism of the poor Iranian peasant is fed by what is perhaps an even more bitter reality. The best lands and especially water from the large dams were distributed first and at dirt-cheap prices to the multinational California agribusinesses.

Furthermore, the already described agricultural price policy contributed to the indebtedness, ruin, and uprooting of the small farmer by opening up the then self-sufficient Iranian market to food imports. The peasant was "freed" by the former regime only in the sense that he was "free" to try to sell his labor power in the cities; "free" to huddle together in the infamous shantytowns in south Tehran.

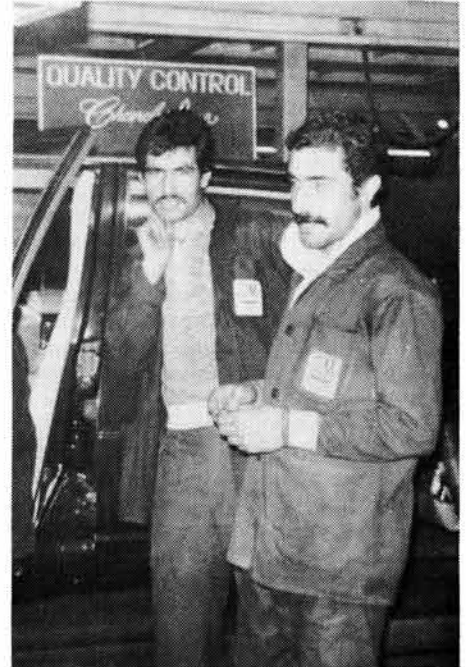
For the Iranian worker, the anti-imperialist movement constituted a privileged moment where his consciousness was raised concerning the terrible exploitation he was a victim of over the years.

This past year he has lived with the sword of Damocles hanging over his head—with factory closings, the departure of foreign technicians, no new investments, capitalist sabotage, and the blockade of raw materials and spare parts.

The anti-imperialist movement was also the beginning of understanding the artificial and false character of industrialization based on assembly plants. Contrary to the official speeches of the regime and of the mentors of the multinational corporations, this kind of industrialization *increased* the country's economic dependence.

Symptomatic of this new state of mind was the initiative taken by several Iranian factories in December. They convened a sort of large fair in Tehran where delegates from different workplaces throughout the country came together to centrally express what they needed and to explain their potential for industrial reconversion in order to confront the blockade and

respond to the most pressing needs of the Iranian population. The needs of the Iranian people, rather than the international division of labor and vertical integration



General Motors workers in Tehran.

of the big multinational corporations, would determine what they produced.

Seizing upon a speech by Bani-Sadr on the necessity of assuring Iran's economic independence, General Motors workers began to discuss converting their factories from plants that produced big American cars for the *Taghoutis*<sup>14</sup> of Chemiran—a wealthy residential section of north Tehran—to plants that produced useful pickup trucks.

They also made contact with shoras from seven other automobile assembly plants to discuss an industrial conversion plan that would allow Iran to have a totally independent automobile industry.

Of course, one could say that there are still illusions, especially about the capacity of the present nationalist leadership and the Iranian capitalists to be able to break the ties of dependence on imperialism. But after visiting the shop floors and the auto assembly lines, no one could deny that incredible expectations have been raised, an immense capital of struggle has been accumulated.

### **The Memory of the Horror**

For all Iranians, the struggle against imperialism is a feeling of renewing and picking up the thread of an old battle from

14. "Satanic." Name given to the henchmen of the former regime. The word comes from the name Taghout, one of the pagan gods worshipped in the Arabian peninsula during Mohammed's time.

the turn of the century that has remained alive in the collective consciousness: the boycott of tobacco and of goods exempted from customs duties by British and tsarist imperialism. This battle was to lead to the constitutional revolution of 1905.

The struggle is a continuation of the battle against the pillage of Iranian oil by the rapacious Anglo-Iranian Oil Company at the end of World War II.

For an entire people, hatred of imperialism involves the accumulated hatred against its interventions, against this Pahlavi dynasty that British capital put into power in the 1920s, a dynasty that was maintained in power through massacres and coup d'états—in 1945-46 and in August 1953, when the CIA overthrew Mossadegh and brought the shah back from his golden exile to institute twenty-five years of terror.

Because the shah was supported by every single U.S. president; because 35,000 U.S. advisers trained the imperial army; because the SAVAK murderers were trained by the murderers of the CIA and the Israeli secret police; the shah's regime was seen by the Iranian masses as the pure creation of imperialism.

Of course, this explanation falls a little short because it leaves aside the responsibility of the Iranian bourgeoisie itself. For twenty-five years they accommodated themselves to the crime, making the system of government work, and throughout 1978 they sought a compromise with the regime. They only fell in behind Khomeini because there was finally no other choice.

So although the explanation doesn't tell the whole story, it explains the deep response that the occupation of the "spy nest" has received from all the Iranian people.

While Khomeini and certain leadership circles could use the embassy occupation in November to renew a consensus and credibility, which had been eroded by the bitter taste of their Kurdish policy, the mass movement that arose in the wake of the occupation ended up backfiring on them. By deepening the crisis and the breakup of the bourgeois nationalist leadership, the mass movement slowed down and impeded the bourgeoisie's attempts to rebuild and consolidate the state apparatus.

The confrontation with imperialism, the economic consequences of the war waged by the United States and its banking institutions until the end of January, and the debate on the economic alternatives, have brought the crisis of the Khomeini leadership and the Islamic Revolutionary Council to a level never before attained.

First of all, there was the stir caused by the revelations concerning the links between the Iran Liberation Movement—Mehdi Bazargan's political formation—with the "spy nest." These links dated from before the February 1979 insurrection, when Bazargan was trying to bring



Scene from February 1979 insurrection.

about a peaceful transition between the government of the shah's last prime minister, Shahpur Bakhtiar, and the new regime. Bazargan, as head of the famous strike coordinating committee, was looking for a way to get the strikers back to work and at the same time declaring that he hoped Khomeini would delay his return to Iran.

The key question was to preserve the state apparatus and most of all the army. And the U.S. embassy served as the clearing house for all these negotiations, contacts, and compromises.<sup>15</sup> One of Bazargan's right-hand men, his former deputy prime minister Amir Abbas Entezam, is today in prison after the students in the embassy exposed his role in these transactions. Bazargan, in good faith, came to his defense and explained that this was not espionage, but rather, politics.

#### Division Over Economic Options

Over the last several weeks we have also seen how the debate over the large-scale economic options has divided the power circles. On one side, Bani-Sadr and the vice-minister of agriculture explain that a new agrarian reform is necessary to revitalize agricultural production. Meanwhile, on the other side the Islamic Revolutionary Council decrees that instigators of

15. In his memoirs just published in French, the shah confirms that U.S. General Huyser, commander in chief of the NATO forces, sent to Tehran by Carter, served as an intermediary between the head of the Iranian army high-command, General Gharabaghi, and Bazargan. (Reza Pahlavi, *Réponse à l'Histoire*, Albin Michel, pp. 246-247.)

land occupations will receive the death penalty.

The same thing happened with urban reform and the housing question. The Islamic Revolutionary Council lashes out against occupation of empty houses and lots. Then a few days later in Tehran an ayatollah leads several poor urban families in an occupation of abandoned villas in the northern section.<sup>16</sup>

One week Bani-Sadr announces the nationalization of foreign trade. (It goes without saying that this measure was not part of a perspective of breaking with capitalism, but rather represents an increase in the ability of the government to control and intervene in the economy).

The next week, at the end of one of the marathon sessions of the Islamic Revolutionary Council, the minister of trade explains that there was never any question of nationalizing foreign trade and that only the warehouses are nationalized.

One could go on and on with similar examples.

#### The Presidential Election

Finally there was the spectacle of the presidential elections. Last June, in the elections for the Assembly of Experts, Khomeini's Islamic Republican Party

16. The average cost of the most common type of workers' housing (one room in an apartment) went from 1,050 rials in 1966 to 8,300 rials in 1977. In 1976, in Tehran, 40% of the housing was overcrowded. The housing shortage totalled 300,000 units. Thirty-one percent of all households lived in a single room and 69% in shared apartments. (Cited in Paul Vieille "Révolution en Iran" *Peuples Méditerranéens*, No. 8, July-September 1979.)

(IRP), led by the Ayatollahs Beheshti and Taleghani, won the majority of seats.

Just the opposite happened in the presidential race, where we saw a real political fragmentation during the campaign. And then the election results registered a stunning defeat for the candidate supported by the IRP and the majority of the religious hierarchy.

At the beginning of the presidential campaign there were no less than eight official or supposedly official candidates: Bani-Sadr; the foreign minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh; Admiral Ahmad Medani, who wanted to be the champion of the middle-class layers and the government bureaucrats by centering his whole campaign around the theme of a return to order and an end to anarchy; Darius Faruher, the labor minister and negotiator with the Kurds; Hassim Rafsanjani, the interior minister known for his diatribes against the left; Hassan Habibi, spokesperson for the Islamic Revolutionary Council and principal author of the constitution; Mehdi Bazargan; and Jalaladdin Farsi, official candidate of the IRP.

At the end of the race, Rafsanjani and Bazargan quietly withdrew, and Farsi was declared ineligible because of his Afghan origins.

The high abstention rate (between 35% and 40%) was undoubtedly due to the withdrawal of Massoud Rajavi, candidate of the "Islamic-progressive" guerrilla organization, the People's Mujahedeen. He was supported by a large part of the far left (including the Fedayeen) as well as by some of the oppressed nationalities, like the Kurds who called for a vote for him.

The whole religious hierarchy, with Khomeini at the head, put enormous pressure on the Mujahedeen, using the argument that they had not called for a vote for the constitution, to get them to withdraw and prevent a snub to the Islamic candidates such as the need for a second round.

The surprising margin of Habibi's defeat is an indication of the setback dealt to the IRP's attempt to set itself up as a vast structured movement, able to capitalize on Khomeini's prestige to politically and organizationally encompass the mass of urban poor by presenting them with a broad populist plan corresponding to their aspirations.

It also indicates the phenomenon of resistance—not only among the Iranian liberal bourgeoisie, but also among the bureaucratic government apparatus (the civil servants and the army represent 1.6 million people) and in the bazaar—to the stranglehold of the mullahs on an economy and government that they are incapable of managing.

Symptomatic, for that matter, was the tone of Bani-Sadr's first speeches following his election. Several months ago, Bani-Sadr himself was denouncing the "counter-revolutionary" passive resistance of the government apparatus.<sup>17</sup> Now, in response



Return of shah is demanded by 35 million Iranians.

to a question about what role he saw for the clergy in the state, Bani-Sadr replied that they would be neither inside nor outside the state, but only above it:

"The religious figures will be able to express themselves or act only through the intermediary of the *Faghi* [the religious guardian whose place is enshrined in the constitution]. This said, a mullah might be made a government official or minister because of his personal qualifications, not because he is a member of the clergy. The Cardinal Richilieu and Cardinal Mazarins are not absent from our society. In any case, Iran will have a modern state apparatus whose leaders will be chosen according to the sole criteria of competence."

One could not put it more clearly. As Bazargan did one year ago, Bani-Sadr is reasserting in his own way, right after his election, the preeminence of the authority of the state and the laws of capitalist economy over the "Islamic dreams" of certain religious sectors.

This does not mean, however, that the road he is embarking upon will be free of obstacles. First of all, Bani-Sadr must establish some political vehicle for himself (a party or a front) by the time of the coming elections for the parliament.

#### Bani-Sadr's Program

Above all, he must make more significant progress in reestablishing the rule of law and the regime's repressive apparatus. Here too Bani-Sadr set the tone:

"The Islamic committees must be dissolved as soon as the prefectures, police, and national police that were inherited from the imperial regime have been reorganized and purged."

17. Interview in *Peuples Méditerranéens*, No. 9, October-December, 1979.

The revolutionary guards will themselves be abolished after the "reconstruction of the military forces, which will be transformed into a true people's army, with officers in the mold of General Giap"<sup>18</sup> (one slight detail is that Giap was never an officer of the shah).

Bani-Sadr also announced that SAVAK is going to give way to a new political intelligence service, although one that, theoretically, will not have judicial powers.

His program could not be clearer when, in addition, Bani-Sadr explains that the students in the embassy must stop being a "power center" and must return to their studies in their respective universities.

The difficulty with Bani-Sadr's plans, however, rests with the Iranian army, which is the decisive element for any political and social stabilization in Iran. But the army is not exactly in the same position as some of its counterparts in the region.

Nasser, for example, was only able to stabilize his populist regime because the Egyptian army—from which the "free officers" who overthrew King Farouk came—was able in 1955-56 to take political advantage of the confrontation with imperialism that followed the nationalization of the Suez Canal.<sup>19</sup>

But in Iran you did not have a coup by young nationalist officers. Instead there was a year of bloody confrontations and mass strikes, culminating in a popular insurrection against the army and the state apparatus that overthrew the Shah's regime.

And that makes all the difference. □

18. January 29, 1980 *Le Monde*.

19. See Mahmoud Hussein, *La lutte de classes en Egypte*, [Paris: Maspéro, 1979], p. 117 and following.

# WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN FOR AID TO NICARAGUA



## How Washington Stalls on Aid to Nicaragua

By David Frankel

Eight months after the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship, the Nicaraguan people are still waiting for reconstruction aid promised by President Carter. And it appears more and more as if the wait is just beginning.

Immediately after its longtime client was run out of Nicaragua, Washington grudgingly dispensed some emergency food aid to the people it had victimized for so many years. But it took Carter more than three months before he got around to asking Congress for some money to help finance the reconstruction of Nicaragua's devastated economy.

On November 9 he finally requested that Congress appropriate a paltry \$75 million in aid to Nicaragua—\$70 million of which was to be a *loan*, most of which was earmarked for the private sector.

Another three months passed before the House of Representatives deigned to take up the matter. When the House finally passed the measure February 27—by a scanty five-vote margin—it added several insulting amendments indicating its view of Nicaraguan sovereignty.

Thus, the members of Congress, who have no intention of contributing a cent to

Nicaragua's literacy campaign, inserted a clause saying that no U.S. funds could be used for schools employing any of the 1,200 Cuban teachers in Nicaragua. These labor-hating agents of the rich also voted to terminate all aid if Nicaragua "violated labor union rights." Somoza, you see, would have never done anything like that.

However, the Washington obstacle course is far from over. First of all, the aid bill passed by the Senate is different from the one passed by the House. The differences must be resolved in a Senate-House conference that has yet to begin. Such joint committees often take months to complete their deliberations, and if deadlocked can send the legislation back for a new vote.

Even if this doesn't happen, the vote so far only authorizes the amount of money to be spent. *The actual appropriation must still be voted by both houses of Congress!* No such vote can be taken until Congress passes a separate law to raise the spending ceiling that it had earlier set for the 1980 fiscal year. That ceiling has already been surpassed.

In short, getting U.S. economic aid to help the Nicaraguan people isn't as easy

as getting U.S. arms to help the Somoza dictatorship. *New York Times* correspondent Graham Hovey reports that officials in Washington "say the Nicaraguans are becoming cynical about the possibility of obtaining any substantial help for reconstruction after a devastating civil war."

What's the matter with these Sandinistas? Don't they have any faith in Uncle Sam? □

## Danes Form Aid Committee

At the beginning of February, the Nicaragua-Committee was formed in Denmark. In its initial news release, the committee announced that it had already collected 55,000 kroner [\$10,000] for aid to Nicaragua.

The committee also announced plans to raise money for building an agricultural school, for the Nicaraguan union federation, for building community centers in the neighborhoods, and for the Nicaraguan women's movement.

The Nicaragua-Committee was formed by a number of prominent individuals and organizations, including the Chile Committee, the Danish-Cuban Society, the Latin American Group of Cooperation Among the Peoples, the Chilean MIR group in Denmark, the Revolutionary Socialist League (Danish section of the Fourth International), the People's Socialist Party, and the Left Socialist Party.

## Solidarity in Switzerland

During February meetings in solidarity with Nicaragua were held in the Swiss cities of Fribourg and Biel, according to the Swiss Trotskyist newspaper, *La Brèche*.

In Biel, 120 people turned out and in Fribourg an entire day of solidarity events was organized, including a slide-show, a talk by a journalist just returned from Nicaragua, and an evening performance by a Latin American folk music group, attended by 200.

The national campaign of the Nicaragua committees throughout Switzerland is now focused on providing aid for Nicaragua's literacy drive.

## Ship With Medical Supplies Sails to Nicaragua

The French Trotskyist weekly *Rouge* reports that a ship containing 30,000 francs (US \$7,200) worth of medical supplies sailed for Nicaragua February 22. Another ship is scheduled to depart in several weeks. These supplies will help equip the health clinics that have been set up in villages throughout Nicaragua.

The following day, February 23, the first national gathering of Nicaragua support committees took place in Paris. Representatives attended from fifteen cities throughout France.

In addition to its campaign of medical aid, the national gathering also decided to launch a campaign for aid to Nicaragua's literacy drive. They especially aim to involve the teachers' unions in this campaign.

The executive committee of the National Education Federation (FEN) in

Loiret has already voted to become involved.

Subcommittees were formed to take charge of other solidarity projects—agricultural material, tools for reconstruction, and so on.

The France-Nicaragua Solidarity Association (ASFN) and the Nicaragua Information Committee (CNI) announced a March 7 meeting in Paris to greet Sergio Ramirez, a member of the government junta of Nicaragua, and Bayardo Arce, a leader of the FSLN.

The ASFN has just published the second issue of its bulletin "Solidarité Nicaragua." It contains reports from recent visitors to Nicaragua, an interview with Octavio Rivas, an official of the Ministry of Education, and reports on the plans for Nicaragua solidarity work in France.